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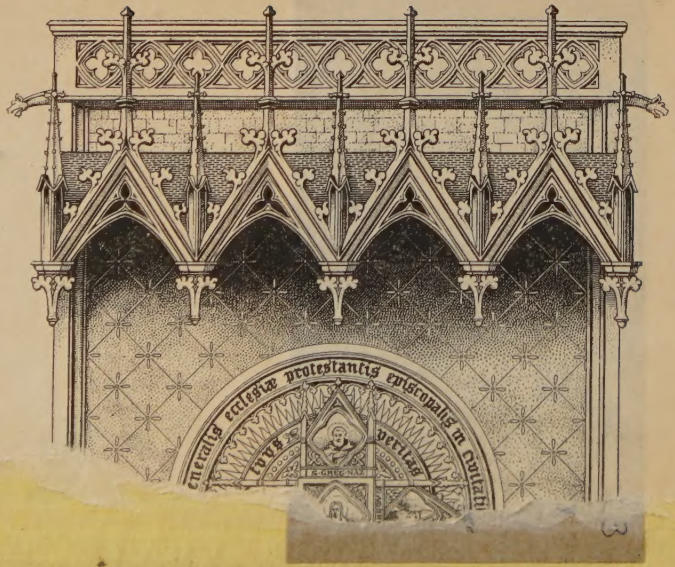
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# CHRISTIAN WATCHFULNESS,

IN THE PROSPECT OF

SICKNESS, MOURNING, AND DEATH.

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BY THE

REV. JOHN JAMES, D.D.

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FAITHFUL SERVANT IN CHRIST,

JOHN JAMES.

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# CHRISTIAN WATCHFULNESS.

## CHAPTER I.

### TO THE READER.

If any readers of this book, in their health, and strength, and prosperity, think the general cast of it too serious, let them not on that account either condemn the sentiments it contains, or slight the consolations it holds forth. Let them suspend their judgment till the scene change with them: till sickness, sorrow, or death, overcast their now cloudless sky; and life present a day of gloom, like the morning spread upon the mountains. It is with the book we open, as with the prospect we look out upon—all is viewed, in some degree, through the medium of our feelings at the moment—whether of misery or happiness. The fairest landscape gives no delight where the heart is desolate; and the brightest sun which ever shone, pours no welcome ray to the captive, whose dungeon gloom, if it reach, it seems but to mock. So the mind of the reader must sympathize with the matter in question, ere it can respond to the voice which speaks either reproof or approval; warning or encouragement; the terrors of the Lord, or his promises.

Our blessed Saviour, who on all occasions spake as never man spake for wisdom, has on this subject

also searched and laid open the very secrets of the heart; touching with Divine skill the springs of action by which it is moved. When He came as the Healer of the nations, He knew full well that unless the soul were conscious of the wound of sin, and felt its pain, the Healer would neither be sought nor welcomed. Hence his awakening reply to the self-righteous, "*The whole need not a physician, but the sick.*" True it is, that this term—"the sick,"—in its spiritual sense, comprehends the whole human race;—and so *all mankind* need the Physician: yet in how many does that sickness lurk insidiously, unseen of others, unfelt by themselves! how many "know not that they are wretched and miserable[1]," till He who loveth men's souls better than they love them themselves, chasteneth and afflicteth them! In the mournful hours of sickness and affliction, man is compelled to feel his awful state, as an immortal and responsible being. Driven then to reflect upon eternal interests, long neglected in health and ease; convinced of guilt and deserved condemnation before God; conscious of spiritual wounds, which the world cannot heal—of spiritual pains, for which the world has no remedy—and awakened to spiritual fear, which the world is utterly unable to remove—he feels also at length his own wretchedness and misery; and gladly flees to the Saviour, Christ Jesus—the great Physician of souls, who alone can supply the remedy.

To the sick at heart, therefore—to the mourner—and to the dying—the following pages are, perhaps, more immediately adapted. To the reader, however, whether he be a child of sorrow or of joy, they are offered with an earnest prayer to the Fountain of Wisdom, to bless them to his instruction and his comfort.

[1] Rev. iii. 17. "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and *knowest not* that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."

## CHAPTER II.

### RELIGIOUS RETIREMENT.

Of the vast numbers of mankind, who, even in this Christian land, pass through life apparently uninfluenced by the Gospel; neither heeding its restraints, nor regarding its precepts, nor soothed by its consolations; the greater portion err, rather from giving themselves no time for serious thought upon its excellences, than from either questioning its authority or doubting its importance. Hurried on by business or pleasure, they pursue their way, as though this world were the end of their existence—no eternity awaiting them; no immortality assured to them. Would they but pause in their course, the truth must force itself upon them—they would at once feel and confess, that to secure eternal happiness for his immortal soul is "the one thing needful" for every man; whilst self-love would lead them to seek diligently for the means of attaining that happiness—and having found the means, to adopt them.

Hence the wisdom of occasionally withdrawing ourselves from the world; examining our own state—as immortal beings; and "judging ourselves, that we be not judged of the Lord." Self-examination conducted thus, in the uninterrupted hours of retirement, tends to keep the soul in safety, by keeping it watchful; strengthens it in every good resolution; checks it, if any downward course of evil have been entered upon; and by promoting a salutary revision of the past, teaches wisdom for the future.

The extent, indeed, to which a holy communing with God in our closets is to be carried, must vary with the circumstances in which we may be placed; and be regulated with a reference to those active duties which belong to the state of life unto which

it may have pleased God to call us. Those duties are not to be neglected; even though piety might prefer seclusion for the fuller enjoyment of religious meditation. David has very beautifully taught us, how activity in the performance of social and relative duties, consists with the deepest and most fervent devotion—the one sustained by the other. "Put thou thy *trust* in the *Lord*, and be doing good;"—let faith in an ever-present God be thy uniform principle of action; repose all thy cares, all thy fears and hopes upon the Lord; *then* go to thy work of duty, and "be *doing good*[1]." We are thus instructed, that a spirit of devotion is to be borne with us from our closets into the world—that it is intended to act, "as leaven upon the whole lump"—working as a living principle upon the whole man; influencing, directly or indirectly, our every thought, word, and action; uniformly regulating the mind and the affections; and enabling us to do *all* things not as unto men, but as unto God.

These considerations are strengthened by the dis-

[1] Ps. xxxvii. 3. 5.

To insist upon a life of seclusion as a necessary proof of holiness, is to argue a total forgetfulness of the Divine ordering of human affairs. Labour is appointed unto every man; and by occupying the time, and thoughts, and industry of mankind usefully to their fellow-creatures, and according to God's commandments, preserves the mind from being tempted to an evil exercise of its powers; it gives to them a virtuous direction, and calls forth every energy for good. Were labour not necessary for the sustentation of man, language could not describe, nor could imagination picture, the horrors which would desolate society.

Nor is seclusion necessarily safety. The solitude of the desert was chosen as a fit scene, where the tempter might most successfully contend with the Son of God: and He, who was "touched with the feeling of our infirmities," and "tempted in all things like as we are, yet without sin," spake from his own experience, when He prayed for us to the Father—"*not* that he should take us *out of the world*, but that he should keep us from the evil." In solitude a man's own heart is often his most dangerous spiritual enemy.

Our care then should be, that when for the sake of religious retirement we withdraw ourselves from active duties, we so do, not in a timid or inactive spirit, but as seeking additional strength for a better fulfilment of whatever duties the good providence of God may lay upon us.

tinction, drawn with equal force and clearness in the discourses of our blessed Saviour upon the subject, and sanctified by his own example. His general course of life was one of *active* benevolence—"He went about doing good:" when, however, He foresaw any especial trial awaiting Him, He *retired* to private prayer; pouring out his supplications before his Father in heaven: He communed with his heart, and was still.

So must it be with us his followers. It is in the stillness of holy communing that the soul is disciplined to a more steady obedience; soothed to a more unruffled peace, or elevated to a holier joy. Conscience, whose voice in the midst of the world's busy turmoil too often falls upon the heart disregarded, is heard, even in its whisperings, when all else is still. Then it is, that the gracious call of the Saviour finds a welcome, as it bids the "weary and heavy laden" go "to him and be at rest." Then, more especially, the Divine promises speak the language of hope, the Holy Spirit breathes into the soul new life, and faith in God triumphs.

Why should you for a moment doubt, that these will be to *yourself, individually*, the blessed effects of a holy communing with the Almighty? If you draw nigh unto Him, with your *heart*, as well as with your lips—if you pour out your whole soul before Him; not keeping back aught of ill, with which conscience may be burdened—if you *desire* that heavenly peace for which you pray—cast away fear. "God giveth not only more than we deserve,—but more than we desire:" gracious as He *always* is, having mercy and compassion upon his servants, He is "*a very present* God in the needful time of trouble." He is all powerful, as well as all-present. He will be *your* God.

It appears, then, that whilst the active duties of our several stations can never safely be neglected, the most laudable activity has its seasons of repose. And

as we all, though appointed to sojourn for a few short years in this mortal life, are created for immortality, it is the duty of every individual to find opportunity for furthering his interests in a future world, as well as for duly ordering his concerns in this. There are, therefore, or there *ought* to be, intervals of rest, when each one of us would do well to look "not only on the things which are temporal, but on the things which are eternal;" to take heed "to the one thing" above all others "needful"—the care of the soul; to acquaint ourselves with God, and be at peace with *Him* here, who hereafter will pronounce upon us the sentence of everlasting woe, or everlasting bliss. And these intervals of rest must be, not only the Sabbath day, God's own day [1], when in the assembled congregation "with one accord we make our common supplications" before Him; not only the hour of family devotion, when the daily sacrifice of prayer and praise sanctifies and blesses, we humbly trust, the Christian's dwelling, but also the hour of occasional retirement; when in the more immediate presence of our God, "we commune with our own heart, and in our chamber, and are still." *In that hour*, withdrawn from all which might agitate the soul, we may hope to find a moment's calm which the storms of life cannot reach, gain a courage which its evils cannot daunt, and secure, for a season at least, that peace which the world is as unable to give as it is powerless to take away.

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## CHAPTER III.

### PROSPERITY.

PERHAPS you are one whom the good providence of God has been pleased to bless with health, and com-

[1] Ps. cxviii. 24. "This is the day which *the Lord hath made*; we will rejoice and be glad in it."

petence, and ease. The world goes well with you; and, being prosperous, you can scarcely understand how it is that "men are born to *trouble*." With respect to this life, you may have fallen into the too common error of considering religion only as the appointed remedy for the *ills* of it—and, therefore, as not required by you, who enjoy only its *blessings*. Yet such are the dangers of prosperity, that never is a religious principle more necessary to guard the soul from evil, than when the world smiles, and so tempts men to the self-gratulation of the rich one in his folly —"Soul, *take thine ease*, and be merry."

Now, therefore, retire for a while to thy closet—commune with thine heart; and in the stillness of retirement, think of the dangers of your state—its responsibility, and its end.

That prosperity naturally tends to withdraw our hearts from God, is a truth confirmed by daily experience. Nay, it often happens, that, in proportion as our heavenly Father poureth his benefits upon us, our sense of obligation grows weaker and weaker; we gradually forget the Giver in the gift; and, having puffed up our vain imaginations with the idle vaunt —"mine own arm hath gotten me the victory," at length boldly trust to our own strength, and presumptuously rely upon our own wisdom, for a continuance of those advantages which the bounty of heaven has vouchsafed to us[1]. David, when brought to a better feeling by holy meditation, confesses that he himself fell into this very sin, even when he knew and allowed that he owed his success to God: "In my prosperity I said, I shall *never* be *removed*—*Thou*, O God, of thy goodness, hast made my hill so strong[2]." A very striking proof that you would act wisely in betaking yourself to occasional retirement, and devout meditation; in order to keep alive in your heart a disposition

[1] 1 Chron. xxix. 12. "Both riches and honour come of *thee*, O Lord! In *thine* hand it is to make great."

[2] Ps. xxx. 6.

of humble dependence upon that kind and gracious God, who so wondrously surrounds you with his mercies, commune with Him—pray to Him that He would give you grace to make a right use of the advantages bestowed upon you; employing them to his glory, and to the good of your fellow-creatures. Thus you may hope to avoid the *dangers* of prosperity. Again: you well know your *final responsibility*. You know, if only from the parable of Dives and Lazarus, that God will require you, at the day of judgment, to render an account, *how* you have used your blessings. In the hour, then, of holy communing, examine yourself, what answer you will be able to give when judged as to your use or abuse of prosperity. Ask yourself—"Do I in a wicked and unworthy spirit of pride shut up my compassion from my less prosperous fellow-creatures?" or rather, "Am I kind-hearted and compassionate to them?" "Has my disposition been softened to the wants of others?" "Having the love of *God* shed abroad in my heart, do I rejoice that it should expand itself in love towards *man?*" "Am I glad to distribute?"—"having freely received; do I freely give?" Nothing will more aid you in this self-examination than retirement and prayer. You cannot estimate prosperity at its true value till you are removed from the immediate glare of its wealth, and applause, and flatteries. Then you will see it to be—not a state in which man's ease alone is to be studied—but as a condition of *responsibility* proportionate to its extent. No man is rich, or wise, or great only for himself. If riches and honour come of God, it is clear that they are to be used to the honour of God, either directly—in exalting his name, and "making his praise glorious," or indirectly—in benefiting his creatures for *his* sake. Here, then, you learn the value of a religious principle; and that principle, if it does *not originate* in retirement, is there *cherished* and matured, till it fulfil its holy purpose, of sanctifying you in your use of blessings, pre-

serving you strong in your integrity, as a faithful servant of God, and forwarding you on your way to heaven.

Other advantages still await you in this course. Should your prosperous condition change, and you be called to suffer adversity, you will be *prepared* for the change. You will, when a poor man, have no self-reproaches for having made a bad use of wealth and influence, when you were rich. Your happiness cannot be destroyed by poverty, because it never rested on riches. "When riches increased, you set not your heart upon them." Besides, not only may your mid-day sun be clouded, but a cloudless sun must, at last, set. The night of death will surely darken the brightest course; and the *end* of riches must be, that at your death *you* leave *them*. If, therefore, your prosperity endure even to the close of life, still must that prosperity be left. No earthly advantages profit in the grave. Alas! for the rich and great in their death, if in life they made riches and greatness their idols[1]. Be yours the wise choice! In the midst of prosperity, choose God as your nearest friend, and his love as your best riches. He will counsel you well, and lead you safely, and, in the dangerous tide of success, enable you so to steer your course, that you make not shipwreck of your faith. Disciplined by the habitual practice of devotional retirement, you will learn to "be sober, and watch unto prayer;" not conformed to this world, though surrounded by its blessings; never unmindful of the Giver of them; and, though encompassed by its allurements, ever uninfluenced by them. Your affections are above—your heart is with your God.

[1] Ecclus. xli. 1. "O death, how bitter is the remembrance of thee to a man that liveth at rest in his possessions, unto the man that hath nothing to vex him, and that hath prosperity in all things!"

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE DAY OF ADVERSITY.

HAS adversity overtaken you? That converse with an ever-present God, which in prosperity was your high duty, becomes now more especially your high privilege.

Your mind is agitated by various evils, with which you feel unequal to cope. Honest and patient industry may have failed to give you the return for your labours, which you reasonably hoped; and your worldly possessions have been diminished, you scarcely know how—"making themselves wings, and fleeing away[1]." Friends whom you loved as your own soul, and long trusted as your own heart, may have proved faithless; or you may yourself, by some ill-advised counsel or your own erring judgment, have surrounded yourself with perplexities. The world's flattering smile is withdrawn. But are you therefore to consider your life as a state of darkness and gloom? God forbid! "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart." Still "rejoice in the Lord[2]." You are privileged, by your Christian covenant, to seek the favour of Him, whose favour is better than life. God is your refuge. In the holy calm of retirement, fail not to hold converse with Him and your own soul. And if the Psalmist's mournful reflection speak the language of your *grief*—"Why art thou so heavy, O my soul? and why art thou so disquieted within me?" let his consequent resolve be the language of your *faith*: "O put thy trust in God. I will yet thank him, which is the help of my countenance, and my God!" Exercise your privilege of access to Him, through the Saviour, Christ Jesus, the

[1] Prov. xxiii. 5.

[2] Ps. xcvii. 11.

Lord. *Fear not!* However your joy be now changed into sorrow, the love of your heavenly Father knows no change; no passing cloud which the world interposes can dim the brightness of his favour. His love and favour veer not with the shifting seasons of good or ill fortune. He loves alike the rich and the poor, the prosperous and the unfortunate—if, like Abraham and Lazarus, they each, in their state of life, exercise faith, and patience, and, "perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord[1]," "adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things[2]."

Delay not then, in this the sad season of adversity, to draw nigh unto thy God. "Cast thy burden upon the Lord." Cling to Him as to a present, sure friend, —flee to Him as a bird to its covert, when storm and tempest rage.

The benefit of this religious meditation will soon be evidenced in a patient submission to the severest trials. By reflecting upon the nature of that God, whom the Gospel reveals to you, and to whom you now look for succour, you learn that afflictions and sorrows are neither the result of chance, nor the tokens of Divine anger. You learn that they are the declared tokens of love from the everlasting Father; who afflicts us for a time here, that we may be prepared for a glorious eternity hereafter. You learn that all things, even the most trivial, which can happen to us individually, are as clearly known to Him, and as surely permitted by Him, as the more important events which affect the world at large. The mere blade of grass under our feet, and the gorgeous heavens above us, are equally the work of his hands, and the object of his care. You cherish this truth, and you derive a comfort from it, which all your prosperity never gave you; for you then, perhaps, *forsook* the counsel, and sought not the converse of your God. You were as one in a thirsty land, where no water refreshed you.

[1] 2 Cor. vii. 1. [2] Tit. ii. 10.

You *then* sought not the *fountain*—what wonder that you found not the waters!

When God is in all our thoughts, we may be poor, even to destitution; we may be borne to the dust by contempt and ignominy; fallen in man's esteem, we may have become objects of his scorn. Yet "shall not our heart be afraid." The patriarch's submission will fill our hearts: "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good." We know that "the disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord." Following the steps of the blessed Jesus, we no longer marvel that we are called to bear our cross; we have been taught that such is the appointed condition upon which his disciples hope to follow Him to his glory[1]. The Apostle's language, therefore, speaks the steady courage of a faithful soul—"we are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; perplexed, but not in despair." Almighty God, "who despiseth not the sighing of a contrite heart, nor the desire of such as be sorrowful," giveth us his grace, whereby we derive strength to bear up under our troubles, and patiently to await their removal, when, and as it may please the Disposer of all things. To Him, after the example of our Divine Master; we have carried our sorrows; and He, having compassion upon our infirmities, has strengthened *us* by his *Spirit*, as He strengthened by his *angel*[2] the *Son* in whom He was well pleased.

Thus it appears, that whether prosperity or adversity mark our days, whether the world tempt us by its smiles to forget God, or by its frowns lead us to distrust Him, our privilege and our duty are the same—to seek the Lord; to commune with Him and with our own hearts, and be still; that by calm and holy meditation in our occasional retirement, we may be armed with the spirit of *firmness* "in all time of our *tribulation*," imbued with a spirit of *humility* and *wisdom*

[1] Matt. xvi. 24.

[2] Luke xxii. 43. "There appeared an angel unto him from heaven strengthening him."

"in all time of our *wealth*," and in every time and place, be filled with that spirit of holiness which is the gift of God, through Jesus Christ his Son.

The inquiring mind naturally asks, why all men do not labour to gain this spirit of strength, and safety, and comfort? The answer is, that in *prosperity*, success too often so entirely engrosses their thoughts, and fixes them upon this present world, that the soul cannot, or will not, escape for sober meditation upon futurity; whilst in *adversity*, the effort to recover lost advantages, whether in fortune or in fame, is too often made with mere worldly views, and with a sole reliance on worldly means. In either case, activity in temporal pursuits is still open to them; and they find no pause for communing with God, till sickness and approaching death compel them to the duty.

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## CHAPTER V.

### SICKNESS.

Hitherto we have reminded you, that occasional retirement for the purpose of devotion is at once our duty and privilege in the time of *health*. In the joyous season of prosperity it is our surest safety; amid the stern necessity of adversity, our surest comfort; though such is the infirmity of man's nature, till strengthened by power from on high—such the perverseness of the human heart, till corrected by the spirit of grace—that in the day of health, the duty is too often neglected, and the privilege too often slighted.

As *sickness*, however, incapacitates for activity, and brings a pause in worldly pleasures, this duty becomes more welcome—this privilege more prized. The mind is more open to the counsels of truth—more awake to the realities of a spiritual and future world—more alive to the high interests of eternity.

This is now *your* case. Sickness, which hitherto has swept down others, has at length fallen upon *you*. A painful languor steals over your frame; the vital powers flag; of worldly duties you are incapable; for worldly enjoyments you have no relish; it is time to shun the busy haunts of men, and, like the wounded hart upon the mountains, retire to the safe covert[1], and there apply the appointed remedy which the great Physician of souls has amply supplied in the Gospel of his Son. When the springs of life are thus weakened; when all which was joyous, saddens; when the activity of health is turned into utter powerlessness; such a change points, with unwonted solemnity, the affecting truths: "We all do fade as a leaf;" "man is as the flower of the field." It is as though a voice from heaven did speak: "Prepare to meet thy God." Surely, his correcting hand is impressing upon your heart a just sense of the vanity of this shifting scene of life; in order that He may receive you unto Himself purified by the chastening. He acts as a father; with the wise care and the tender anxiety of a parent, He is gradually weaning you from things temporal, that you finally lose not the things eternal. True it is, that with all the fondness of a nursling, hanging yet upon its mother's breast, you naturally cling to this world; her caresses you covet; her smiles you look for; her soothing endearments you repose upon. But 'tis time now to put away childish things[2]. The realities of eternity await you. You will soon be called to act in new scenes, as an immortal being; you will be engaged in new duties with the spirits of the just made perfect; and with them share, as you humbly hope, new joys—even the everlasting joys of heaven.

But ere these new scenes and duties open upon you, ere a hope so glorious be realized, you must be clear of this lower world; your affections must be set on things above, not on things which are upon

[1] Isa. xxxii. 2.

[2] 1 Cor. xiii. 11.

the earth; wherefore your heavenly Father gradually weans you from a world, for which, by nature, your attachment is the strong and clinging affection of a child to its nursing mother; and embittering the allurements of that world by sending sorrow, and sickness, and pain, He renders it distasteful to you, and so leads you to look forward to higher pleasures—to more enduring joys—to the joys and the glories of eternity.

Amongst the various advantages which result to the Christian from a solemn view of his mortality, especially in a season of sickness, is this—that the more prepared he is, by deep repentance, and a lively faith, and a holy obedience, to meet his change from life to death, the more calm he may hope to be, *bodily* as well as mentally. Where the soul is ill at ease, the misery of sickness is awfully increased. And who can be surprised that terror agitates those whose "debts" to God are still unpaid, because *He* who alone can pay them, has been rejected, or forsaken, or forgotten by the debtor[1]? Taking it for granted that no man on his death-bed can think slightingly of eternity, but that every man must, *then* at least, be deeply anxious to secure future happiness; it is no wonder that the scoffer, the irreligious, the worldly, and "all the people who forget God[2]," should be so confounded in the season of sickness, by self-reproach for the past, by active terrors for the present, and dark anticipations for the future, that the weakened frame finds no rest—sleep forsakes the sufferer—and

[1] Matt. xviii. 27. 32. "Then the Lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the *debt*." "Then his Lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that *debt*, because thou desiredst me."

How simply, yet how powerfully, has our Divine Teacher illustrated, in this parable, the nature of our offences before God, the justice with which He might inflict punishment for them, and the unbounded mercy which accepts the satisfaction of another, and so "forgiveth us our debts," for Jesus Christ's sake!

[2] Ps. ix. 17. "The *wicked* shall be turned into hell, and all the people that *forget God*."

every *bodily pain* is *aggravated* by the sharper pains of the soul. Hence the benefit to the sick, of a tranquil mind; a mind, which, firm in faith—unruffled by agitating thoughts of the past, or over-anxious care for the present, or unavailing fears for the future—has already made its peace with God through Jesus Christ; upon *Him* casts all its care, and awaits in patient resignation whatever be the end of his fatherly visitation. Of this calmness of the soul the body partakes; and to this mental repose, the sick are oft-times indebted for sweet hours of rest and sleep, which they alone can know, who, whether in health or sickness, sleep as under the shadow of HIS wing—whose favour is better than life[1].

Should then this *your* sickness be unto *death*, blessing rests upon your holy communing. You are prepared, undismayed, to meet your Judge; for you have, as your Advocate, One who never pleads in vain. O think, my Christian reader, how great the blessedness of being spared in your last hours that *additional misery* which results from *neglecting* the soul and eternity—a misery which in all its fulness and terror awaits those, who, neither in health nor sickness, seek that great Being, from whose mercy in Christ alone, it is, that this holy calm—this blessed repose—can be derived! Faith in that Almighty Redeemer and prevailing Advocate disarms even bodily pain of a portion of its power; fortifies the soul against unfounded spiritual fears; sustains it in its weakness, and gently prepares it for its close.

[1] So wonderfully do mind and body act upon each other, that, as a distempered body sometimes produces a disordered mind, and an uneasy and restless mind aggravates bodily suffering, not unfrequently defeating the fairest means of recovery, so in cases where the sufferers—sustained by a firm and Christian faith and a bright Christian hope—are able to cast all their care, both for bodily and spiritual health, on the Lord, it is wondrous to observe the beneficial effect of tranquillity of mind, in inducing, by the Divine blessing, tranquillity of body. This truth supplies no unimportant reflection to us all; liable as we every moment are to pain, and sickness, and sorrow, and death.

If, on the other hand, the means used by human skill be blessed, and life be spared, even then you cannot better further the physician's skill, than by applying religion to free the soul of all violent emotion, and so allowing it to repose in faith—serene in the peace of God, which passeth all understanding. Whereas, should you wilfully delay this required self-examination, this hearty repentance, this holy communing with God, till sickness bring down your strength in your journey, you hazard both soul and body. Even as to the *body*, you aggravate the evils by which you are afflicted; and yourself defeat the very measures taken to relieve your sufferings. How can medicine possibly have its due effect upon your frame, if it be countervailed by continual agitations of a sinful mind, and a self-accusing spirit? How can even the tender attentions of those relatives and friends who watch your every look with the fondest affection —how can they effect their object of soothing you, if the secret self-condemnation of an unrepenting state keep up in your mind a continual terror? And wherever any acknowledged duty is left undone—wherever the heart is dissatisfied with itself—*there* the secret terrors of conscience allow *no rest;* and the hour of sickness makes evident a truth, which the day of health had kept concealed,—"There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked."

Thus, on every account, from a sense of duty; from a regard to self-interest; from dread of future woe, and hope of future bliss; now that you feel sickness come upon you, turn with more than wonted seriousness to your religious duties. Let repentance, prayer, holy communing with God, an honest self-examination of the past, with good resolutions for the time to come, occupy your mind, and employ your thoughts. You have now opportunity for reflection, from which you cannot escape. Call, then, to remembrance your ways and your doings. Turn now to God with a holier devotion, a sincerer service, and a

more thankful heart. The performance of these duties will bring its own reward—will shorten the long nights of wakefulness—rob pain of half its misery—and often render the hours of sickness, hours even of joy. So cheering to the heart of man; so soothing to his pains; so sustaining to his spirit, is the abiding sense of the presence of a reconciled Father in heaven!

## CHAPTER VI.

### SICKNESS.

When thus serious thoughts crowd upon your heart, give them welcome; cherish them. Do not vainly fear, that, by preparing for death, you will fill your soul with gloom and despondency. Even in the bright days of health, to be serious does not imply being melancholy; nor does communing with God require nor even allow a gloomy spirit. So far is this from being the case, that, in proportion as you are *prepared* to *die* at peace with God, you are prepared to *live* at peace with Him. Your life will be more calm, more happy; and the season of sickness will prove to you a blessed season—a spiritual seed-time. True! you "*sow* in *tears*," but you will "*reap* in *joy!*" You will gratefully acquiesce in the chastisement of the Lord; adopting the feelings and the language of the Psalmist, "Before I was in trouble I went wrong, but now have I known thy word." You have, at length, time to think of many things, to the consideration of which, either the enticing pleasures of the world, or its perplexing cares, have hitherto proved an insuperable obstacle. Nay, it may perhaps have happened that even the occupation proper to your state of life, and the calls of honest industry, may have prevented that deep attention to the concerns of the

soul, which you now *feel* to be "the one thing needful."

Trusting, then, as I do humbly trust, that on this, your bed of sickness, you will endeavour earnestly to turn to your soul's good the hours which can no longer be devoted to the furtherance of your worldly interests, I would fain converse with you from time to time on some of those high matters which concern us all as responsible beings,—but which hitherto may have been passed by neglected, as though this world were our all.

You probably find, what the sick generally experience, that the first serious thought which springs up in the soul, is that of self-condemnation, as it awakes to a sense of sin and guilt before God. "And is it come to this? Here, as I lie on my sick bed, alone with memory, a thousand instances rush to my recollection wherein I must have offended my God, but which have been till now forgotten by me. Sins committed—duties neglected—knowledge despised—all rise up, and, arrayed by conscience, bear witness against me; a fearful indication of that searching judgment which awaits me hereafter! O God! forgive me! O God! be merciful to me a sinner!"

And God *will* forgive you—if you be sincerely sorry for your sins. If, remembering the instructive and monitory distinction drawn by St. Paul, you "sorrow after a *godly* sort[1]," your sorrow shall be turned into joy. To a worldly eye, your state is one of misery[2]. A bodily frame subdued by sickness, and a heart mourning its infirmities; days of pain, and nights of waking; the world able to afford little comfort, and you unable to welcome it—these things *seem* to render you an object of pity and compassion. But this is only a *seeming*. I know, that amidst this apparent misery, and outward wretchedness, there is an approach to that inward peace and heavenly joy, "with

[1] 2 Cor. vii. 11. [2] Wisdom of Solomon, iii. 1.

which the stranger intermeddleth not;" and the hope of which you would not exchange for all the joyousness of which they boast, who know not God their Saviour.

Contrast your present state of wordly woe and spiritual peace, with your former state of worldly joyousness and spiritual sorrow; and view the many who reverse this condition—those who, though in health and strength of body, are sick and faint in spirit and in hope: well might they envy you in your pain, and sickness, and watchfulness!

Look at the wicked, the worldly, the unchanged in heart. Their evil course of life not only lays up for them wrath against the day of wrath, when God will punish the impenitent in a future state, but renders dark even their present hour, how fairly soever the world may smile upon it. Suppose them to attain their end—whether grasping some illusive pleasure, or compassing some unlawful gain—not only every passing hour brings them nearer to that Judge who noteth their sins, and will punish them, but even in this life their heart is the abode of wretchedness. At the very time when, like men under a delusion, they are deceiving themselves, by "*calling* evil good, and good evil; putting darkness for light, and light for darkness; bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter[1];" they cannot make the evil good, or the darkness light, or the bitter sweet; evil still brings misery,—darkness shame,—and bitterness disgust. Conscience is ever reproaching them; confusion covers them. Perhaps

[1] Isa. v. 20. The *deceitfulness* of sin is proverbial.

Upon the character of sin thus drawn by Isaiah, St. Paul grounds the reasonableness of his appeal to those whom he would fain shame from a sinful course. He bids them remember the *real* misery which every sinner endures, even at the moment when his sin may have been successful. Addressing himself to hearts already *ashamed* of the past, he puts the searching question,—"What *fruit* had ye *then* in those things whereof ye are now *ashamed?*" Rom. vi. 21.—The penitent avows the truth, "This my wickedness is *bitter*, it reacheth unto mine heart." Jer. iv. 18.

there is to each a *secret* wish—"O that I were as in the days of old!" but false shame, that remorseless slayer of souls, interposes to check the rising wish; conjures up a thousand idle fears of man, who at most "can kill the body only;" pictures to itself the finger of scorn; the mockery of companions; or the loss of former pleasures—and so succeeds in adding fresh entanglements, till the soul, like a captive bird in the snare, is fixed by its own struggles still faster in its bonds, and becomes a ready prey for the fowler.

Compare your present state with this. Would you change? Your body indeed is weak, and brought low, even to the borders of the grave; but your soul, day by day, becomes stronger in holy thoughts; firmer in patient resignation; happier in the consciousness of a renewed spirit—at peace with God and man. In the midst of your bodily sufferings, you view with pity the prosperous in their sin; you remember how unsatisfying were those pursuits of worldliness by which you yourself were formerly enslaved; you now rejoice in the fulness of that grace which is all your care, and all your aim. You retrace past years; when your temper was easily ruffled, your disposition harsh, your whole mind restless and unquiet. You remember that you then could not fly from your misery—because you could not fly from yourself. But now the love of God is shed abroad in your heart; and, being at peace with Him, you are at peace with the whole world. Thus you may hope to go on from strength to strength, till not only with patient Job you will be *resigned* to the dispensations of the Almighty, but with you, as with St. Paul, faith will so triumph, that you will *rejoice* in afflictions; and *that*, not as displaying a cold apathy under ills, but as animated by the reasoning of the same Apostle—"Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but *grievous*: nevertheless *afterward* it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby[1]."

[1] Heb. xii. 11.

In a sustaining spirit of faith you carry your view to that "*afterward*"—cheered on your way by the hope of a pardoning God, a loving Saviour, an ever-present Comforter.

"*Blessed* then is the man whom thou *chastenest*, O Lord! and teachest in thy ways." O my reader, blessed mayest thou be in this *thy* chastening! For such blessing, you would not take the world in exchange. If you recover from this sickness, and health be restored to you, good ground is there to trust that your future life will be as different to your former life as light from darkness. "Old things are passed away, all things are become new." You will delight in the service of God, as in perfect freedom. With Him you will walk; in his presence you will live. Love to Him will produce love to man. In doing *his* will, you will find your own best happiness. By a holy and religious life, you will "let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Thus you will rejoice to show forth all his praise.

If you do *not* regain health, if your sick-bed become your death-bed; your pious thoughts, and sincere heart-searchings, and holy communing, will return into your own bosom, bearing blessing to you. All your humbling thoughts of yourself—all your good resolutions—all your devoted love to the Saviour—all your submission to the godly motions of the Spirit—all your honest though oft-times painful application of the word—that heart-piercing sword of the Spirit unsparingly severing sin from your soul—all these, the proofs of a new and living principle—shall aid you in working out your salvation, though with fear and trembling. Your good and gracious God, the merciful Being, who, knowing all things, knoweth also your infirmities, and hath compassion on them, will accept, for Jesus' sake, the outpourings of a humble and contrite spirit; will, in power and mercy, conduct you safe through the grave and gate of death, to your

joyful resurrection; and finally receive you to his favour. Angels shall then raise their song of praise, as they welcome you to their company, and proclaim to the blissful choir of heaven—Behold! one pardoned sinner more.

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## CHAPTER VII.

### SELF-EXAMINATION.

HAVING thus far continued your meditations, and found by serious communing with God and your own heart, the truth of the Divine word, that whom the Lord *loveth* He chasteneth—you will wisely persevere in this profitable work; and since sickness still withdraws you from the business and pleasures of the world, more and more closely examine your past life. As we become practised in the exercise of self-examination, it is wonderful to observe, how much more skilfully we detect latent errors in our conduct, and perceive secret faults which beforetime were either altogether overlooked by us, or considered too trifling for our notice. And as we draw nearer to that tribunal, where the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed, —where so severe will be the scrutiny of the Judge, that "for every *idle word*" He will judge his creatures[1], —our views undergo a further change; we begin to judge ourselves on many poitns, where before we considered ourselves faultless; we scrutinize our *thoughts* as well as words, and in the undisturbed calm of sickness become impartial judges.

Such is your case. You rejoice, perhaps—and you reasonably may rejoice—that you were never guilty of the grosser sins which sometimes, alas! disgrace those called by the name of Christ. You have not

[1] Matt. xii. 36. "But I say unto you, That *every idle word* that men shall speak, they shall *give account thereof* in the day of judgment."

been a drunkard or a swearer; you have been neither profligate nor dishonest. The vices to which such yield themselves you have ever abhorred. Happy for you that in these things you have a conscience void of offence! But you are well aware it is not enough merely to avoid what is sinful. You must not only "cease to do evil," you must "learn to do well." There must not only be abstinence from vice—there must be the practice of virtue. There must be no neglect of duties enjoined—*no forgetfulness* of God! God must be in *all* our ways, and in *all* our thoughts, if we would be at peace with Him. The same Divine word which deters you from the commission of wilful sin, commands and invites you to active holiness; bids you lead a life of watchfulness and prayer; warning you in most awful terms—distinct as awful—that neglect of duty, where the knowledge of it is revealed, shares the condemnation which awaits actual sin: "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and *all* the people that *forget God*[1]!"

This is a very important consideration for each of us. You must feel it to be so for yourself. In the many wakeful hours which you have experienced on your sick-bed—in the stillness of night, when not a sound, perhaps, has caught your ear, save the wind, as it swept by—emblem of the Spirit which searcheth your heart by its unseen but sure influence[2]—in those hours of solemn stillness, this thought may have come across you, and struck sadness into your soul; for who hath not sometimes *forgotten* his God—who hath not been *sometimes* unmindful of his gracious presence, his power, his mercy, and his love?

You have, *then*, confessed to your own heart—"Alas, it is too true, that I have often and often forgotten my God: and though by so doing I seem not to have harmed other people, I have done harm to myself, by forgetting what I ought to have been to Him, and

[1] Ps. ix. 17.

[2] John iii. 8.

*He* fain would have been to *me!* Whilst He, year by year, has been long-suffering and gracious, offering me reconciliation and fatherly care, I have disregarded Him as if He were not my preserver here: as if He were not to be my judge hereafter. And, alas! I now shame to think how long I injured the cause of his Gospel, by withholding the honour due unto his name publicly before men. I forgot, or acted as if I forgot, his word—his Sabbaths—his Sacraments. I must confess, it would grieve me that a friend so forgot me; especially if I had done him service, and been his benefactor, daily conferring kindness upon him. Yet my *heavenly* Benefactor, who is ready to 'call me *friend*[1],' and 'pour his benefits upon me[2],' has hitherto experienced from me the basest ingratitude. Oh! now I feel what it is to have a fallen sinful nature—now I feel myself wretched in my sin! There is indeed no health in me. *Now* all my thought is, 'Lord, be merciful to me a sinner.' O Lord! grant me pardon for the past, and grace for the time to come; that both in health and in sickness, I may *remember* Thee; my unwearied Benefactor, my heavenly Friend, my Saviour, and my God."

Thus it is that we can judge with sufficient clearness, when we place ourselves in the situation of another. We know what we expect of other men; and we allow, that to neglect a friend till some strong necessity drives us in very selfishness to seek his counsel or assistance, argues no enviable disposition; whilst we look with pity, bordering on contempt, upon the feelings of shame which must overpower a man who becomes a supplicant to one whom he has treated with neglect and dishonour. Yet is not this, in point of fact, the

[1] John xv. 15. "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you *friends;* for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you."

[2] Ps. lxviii. 19.

very case with every man who neglects God in the season of health and prosperity; and turns to Him only when sickness, sorrow, or approaching death convince him that the world can give no refuge, that he has none else to flee to—none else to succour him? It is a fearful risk to neglect God, till we *must* seek Him; and an awful presumption, to take for granted that He whom for long years we have neglected, will become our friend, only when we can find no other to help us. True; the Gospel encourages us to seek Him, even at the eleventh hour—But oh! the daring of mortal man, to presume upon being spared to that hour!

These observations are made, *not* to *discourage* you: God forbid! My object is, to place before you more strongly the mercy of God, in thus affording you opportunity, in a season of sickness, of seeking Him while He may be found—to make you feel more powerfully the blessed truth, that "whom the Lord *loveth* he chasteneth,"—to show in stronger contrast the mercies of an offended God, and the unworthiness of his offending creatures—and to point to our own hearts individually, the just but mortifying confession of the prophet, that though "to the Lord belong *mercies* and *forgiveness;*" "to *us* belongeth *confusion* of face[1]." The best of the servants of God, when they thus search their hearts diligently, examine them thoroughly, and compare what they have done, with what they ought not to have done, and what they have left undone, with what they ought to have done, will rise up from their self-examination with the lowly avowal of the Psalmist, "my confusion is daily before me; and the shame of my face hath covered me[2]."

[1] Dan. ix. 7. 9.

[2] Ps. xliv. 15.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### SELF-EXAMINATION.

READER! perhaps thou art one whom the Providence of God hath placed in a higher sphere than the generality of thy fellow-creatures. Thou hast honour, wealth, and learning. Art *thou* too in affliction? Hath sorrow found out *thee?* All the defences which the world threw around thee, have they failed to ward off misery? The fountain of health hath ceased to flow; sudden injury hath cut down thy strength; disappointment has foiled thy well-laid schemes of ambition.—Come now, and withdraw from the world which hath wounded thee, "commune with thine own heart, and in thy chamber, and be still." Hitherto, perhaps, your course of life may have been such as justly to obtain the meed of praise from your fellow-creatures; you have been disinterested in your benevolence; ready to give counsel; upright and honourable in your dealings, avoiding the meaner motives of action which weigh with lower minds. Still you *may* as yet have lived to *this world only*. If so, turn from an object so unworthy to engross your thoughts and affections. Direct your views higher—even to your own everlasting welfare in a better and eternal world. Ask your heart, "Am I prepared for *that* world? am I prepared to meet my God at the bar of judgment?" Fairly "judge yourself, that you be not judged of the Lord." Conduct this self-examination in that spirit of candour which always marked your dealings with your fellow-creatures. Resort to no subterfuge to avoid self-condemnation. Let your wonted love of truth and honour influence you in your dealings with God and your soul. Follow the example of the royal Psalmist. He, in the season of *his* distress, turned away, as I would now earnestly and affectionately

entreat you to turn, from the world which had failed to succour him; he sought, as I pray you now to seek, his God; and *this* was his anxious and unreserved prayer for Divine aid to help him in the work of self-examination—"Try me, O God, and examine my thoughts: see if there be *any* way of wickedness in me, and lead me in the way everlasting [1]." The penitent's sincerity who could doubt, when he prayed for the heart-searching influence of the Spirit of God, to find out the lurking evil of his soul? and who shall doubt the extended mercy of Him to whom that humble prayer ascended?

Not that the advantages of a high station are to be despised. "Both riches and honour come of *Thee*, O God [2]," and they are bestowed upon the individual, that He may use them to advance the glory of the Giver, and the welfare of mankind. Yet such is the weighty responsibility attached to their use, that they are never to be coveted. Besides which, even with respect to this world, the value of these advantages has its limits. Beyond the grave they profit not. Nay, they cannot profit even on a bed of sickness: they give neither rest to the weary, nor sleep to the wakeful—they can neither mitigate pain, nor add one hour to the closing scene of life. You can yourself, sick and weary, testify to this truth. Pause then, whilst life remains; and, ere the darkness of death overshadow thee, apply all the faculties with which God hath blessed thee, all the varied learning which opportunity hath enabled thee to acquire—apply them to the highest concern which ever yet hath engaged thy thoughts: direct them all to secure, by the appointed means, the eternal welfare of thy soul. Let me again remind you, that *yours* is a *heavy* responsibility, in rendering up your account. Riches, and honour, and power, and influence, are precious talents committed to your care, which must all give their in-

[1] Ps. cxxxix. 23, 24.

[2] 1 Chron. xxix. 12.

crease—must severally be used to the glory of the Giver of them, and to the welfare of his creatures.

In what manner you should prepare to meet this responsibility, you cannot be ignorant; unless the ignorance be wilful: for you know what you expect from those who are responsible to you.

Or are you conscious of sins committed, and unrepented of? As you lie on your bed of sickness, and ponder these things, does conscience tell you that you have not, even as a moral agent, employed your advantages as you ought? If such should be the case—if memory reveals not only wasted opportunities of leading a holy life to the honour of God, the good of your fellow-creatures, and your own eternal welfare; but activity in sinful courses: if, amid the temptations of prosperity, you lived for this present evil world, the slave of your passions, and the victim of your lusts; revelling as though there were no punishment for the wicked, and scoffing as if there were no reward for the righteous: if, so long as you could escape the reproach of men, you cared not for the anger of God: blind to the future world opening upon you, and the future reckoning awaiting you—*Now* REPENT! *Now* is the fit season—even the blessed season of thy sickness! Commune with thine heart! Heed the Apostle's question—searching as unwelcome—"*What fruit* hadst thou *then*, in those things whereof thou art *now* ashamed[1]?" The fruit *then* was bitter, and the sin is remembered *now* with shame and sorrow. All is changed. This world is fast fading from your view; the next, with all its awful realities, is opening upon you, increasing its terrors indeed as you remember your sins; but also expanding its joys, as you repent, and believe, and return unto the Lord your God. Your weeping, and penitence, and prayer will be graciously heard. Having your pardon sealed by the Spirit of grace, you will be enabled to embrace and

[1] See Note, page 20.

hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life set before you in that Saviour Christ Jesus, who came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. Yours is no vain hope: "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." How earnestly, methinks, does your prayer of penitence rise to the throne of mercy, that for you also they may rejoice, when the gates of heaven shall open for you. Yours is now the grateful avowal of the humbled king of Israel: "Before I was in trouble I went wrong, but now have I known thy word."

As with others in the time of sickness, so it may be with you. Of the various offences against God which present themselves to your remembrance, perhaps none appear more glaring than your neglect of the word of God: because to that neglect *you also* attribute much of the irreligion which formerly marked your conduct, and of which you so heartily repent. Nor is it less strange than wicked, that one skilled in all learning, and with abilities to appreciate whatever excellence the pen of wisdom might indite, should neglect the wonders of that word, till sorrow, sickness, and approaching death terrify him to his duty; should neither search its records, nor examine its doctrines, nor consider that the Bible is in fact the voice of the Creator speaking to his creatures—the holy converse of the invisible, eternal God with the forfeit souls of men—itself the fountain of all wisdom.

Surely, if ever there was a period in the history of Christianity, when they, to whom are afforded opportunities of cultivating their intellectual powers, must be conscious of a glaring and open violation of a bounden duty in neglecting the word of God—it is in *these* days; days marked by an extension of human learning, and a facility in acquiring it, altogether unparalleled. The experience of the past warns us, that as scientific attainments become general, there is too much ground to fear lest intellectual pride should elevate itself; and reason should delight to array itself

against revelation[1]. Who sees not, then, that in proportion as human learning is extended, so Divine wisdom claims the closer regard? "The wisdom of the world, when it stands *alone*, " is foolishness with God," and brings ruin to its votaries by fostering an intellectual pride, which is an especial offence to the majesty of the Most High. If man fancies his own reason a sufficient guide, and trusts to human learning for counsel whereby to guide his ways, either with integrity before men, or holiness before God, he raises in his heart a Babel-tower, whose end is confusion[2].

To this truth you can yourself bear testimony. Your heart allows, that disregard of the *Divine law* was your *first* step to misery. Had you read and studied the Bible, and applied it to your heart and conduct, with prayer for Divine grace to aid your endeavours, you had been blessed in your deed. Those pages of Divine wisdom would have sanctified your human learning, by teaching its true application; would have meliorated your heart, by inculcating humility; would have shown you the value of your soul, and of the salvation wrought for it by the Gospel; and whilst it purified your affections, would have gladdened your spirit by leading you to the bright hopes of another and a better world; where he alone will be found to have gained true wisdom, who shall be found "wise unto salvation."

[1] There *is* a wisdom which "descendeth *not* from *above*."

[2] The principle upon which these observations are founded, is too clear to be a matter of doubt.

What was man's original offence? Was it not the proud wish to be wise above that which was revealed? "Ye shall be as gods," said the serpent to our first parents, "knowing good and evil." And what form has worldly pride now assumed in this land? *Not* the pride of *wealth—that* would lead to a different result; would be productive of carefulness to preserve in quiet, what industry had procured in an honest calling. *Nor* is it the pride of *ancestry—that* is wont, let us hope, to be the spring of noble feeling and honourable conduct. It is the pride of *intellect*—striving to supersede, as a guide through this life to the next, the word of God, and the Spirit of God.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE BIBLE.

Your attention being awakened to your spiritual and eternal interests, and your conviction strong, that they who would live hereafter in happiness as servants of God, must live here in holiness, and begin upon earth that service of praise which will constitute the bliss of heaven [1], you readily turn for guidance and instruction, for counsel and comfort to that holy book, the word of God, your past neglect of which is remembered with a shame, proportionate to the humble and teachable spirit with which you now open its welcome page. In reading and studying its glad tidings you rejoice. It affords the most cheering encouragement to the fainting spirit of penitence; the surest support to the weak-hearted; and to all, it holds forth the promise of pardon, peace, and glory. There, Almighty God, your heavenly Father, speaks to you as clearly as though you heard his voice from heaven. As a parent may be said to speak to his absent children, when he makes known to them his wishes, or conveys to them the expression of his love by *letter*—the *written* declaration of his sentiments, making the absent present; so the Bible, which is the written word of God, makes present to man upon earth, the majesty of Him who reigneth in heaven.

This your blessed change of feeling is followed by a clearer understanding of the *value* of the Holy

[1] Rev. vii. 14, 15. "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

"Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them."

Scriptures. You wonder at yourself in having neglected a treasure so precious. And this wonder is increased, when you further consider, that by neglecting the Bible, you not only offend the great Being, whose word and will it contains, but neglect your own highest interests. What does the Bible contain? even our title to heaven[1]: preserved from age to age by so evident a care of Divine Providence, that its preservation alone, were all other testimony wanting, forms a powerful and convincing evidence of the truth. In worldly matters, when a man has, or thinks he has, a title or claim to an inheritance, he spares no pains to assure to himself the possession of it. He examines the title-deeds, either by himself, or by some other who may understand the writings better than he does. He ascertains that they are duly sealed, and in every way safe. Moreover, if there be any conditions annexed to the possession of the inheritance, however trivial in themselves those conditions may be; however peculiar their nature; however precisely and punctually required; he carefully observes them. At the appointed day and hour he fulfils the conditions, and presents the required offering—in itself perhaps of no value or

[1] This mode of representing the renewed state of man by grace, is frequently resorted to by the sacred writers; especially by St. Paul. That Apostle appears to delight in the comparison, as strikingly illustrative of the doctrine he preaches. He speaks of the kingdom of glory as an inheritance, which the faithful are to share, being "*heirs* of God, and joint heirs with Christ:" and he gives us the comforting hope, that in the same Saviour, whose *inheritance* we share, we are also "*sealed* by that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the *earnest* of our inheritance:" the sealed covenant whereby we hold our title. Eph. i. 13.

"Our Church adopts the same figure of speech; and instructing the young Christian in the nature of his baptismal covenant, she thus comprehends the benefits of it. He is thereby made "a member of Christ, a child of God, and an *inheritor* of the kingdom of heaven"—terms grounded upon the apostolic enumeration of the blessings of the Christian Covenant. So, when the Colossians are exhorted to be "fruitful in every good work—giving thanks unto the Father," the Apostle adds, as a ground for this *grateful* obedience, the encouraging assurance, that the same Almighty Being had made them "meet to be partakers of the *inheritance* of the saints in light." Col. i. 12.

importance, but indispensable as a token of the covenant whereby the inheritance is held, and by failure in observing which, the inheritance is forfeited.

Shall the children of this world be *ever* wiser in their generation than the children of light? Shall a man be wise to secure an *earthly* inheritance, and *not* be wise to secure an inheritance in *heaven?* Shall he use all diligence, compass sea and land to attain a possession which, when gained, brings with it always heavy responsibility, often much care, and sometimes much sorrow; and which, after all his anxious toil, he must leave behind him when he dies; and shall the same individual take no heed for a possession, which is not only free from anxiety, and care, and sorrow; but which defies the possibility of a change—a possession, eternal in the heavens? Shall he not deign even to look at the records which contain his title to it? Shall he cast them from him as of no worth? and all perhaps because the conditions require a suit and service, to which human passions will not bend themselves.

How heartily I rejoice that your heart now echoes these sentiments! that when you open the sacred volume in which sickness and sorrow have, by a blessed constraint, led you to seek comfort, you say to yourself with the enviable feelings of a reconciled child of God—"Here is my title to heaven, through my all-prevailing Saviour. Here is the record of my inheritance as a joint-heir with Christ of a heavenly kingdom. My title is written in letters of living light—confirmed by the solemn word of Jehovah, and sealed with the blood of the Holy One and the Just. Oh! that I should so long have kept the record closed! God be merciful to me a sinner!"

And He *will* be merciful. "Turn yourselves, and live ye," is his command to the careless souls. Thou *hast* turned; therefore He will give thee life. His Spirit will, day by day, renew the power of grace in your heart. It is by his grace that you are at length

enabled to find his presence your delight, and his voice your joy. The Book whereby that voice speaks and that presence is manifested, is your daily comfort and support. You are a living proof of its power to detect sins, negligences and ignorances; of its power to bind up and heal the broken-hearted by its promises of pardon; of its power to lead men safely and surely into the path of life eternal. You can now tell others that there is scarcely an evil in your past life, against which the Bible, had you followed its precepts, would not have guarded you; and that in *this*, your heavy *affliction*, it is a rod and a staff to comfort you.

Nor need you doubt but that such it *will be* to you, even to *the end*. The best and the wisest have found it their stay in the hour of peril and of death. Martyrs have borne it with them to the torments which awaited them; and have so been sustained to meet their doom without a murmur. To them, amid the flames by which their bodies were consumed, it was as the angel of the covenant with the three sons of Israel in the burning furnace—the form of whom was like the Son of God. It was as the voice of "a *very-present* God"—"I am with you *alway*, even unto the end of the world."

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## CHAPTER X.

### THE BIBLE.

Come now, and let us meditate still further on this wondrous record of God's will. The Bible, if it speak to the *heart* of the unlearned, speaks not less powerfully to the *understanding* of the learned. If all the leading truths, whereby erring man is conducted to the way of life eternal, be so plainly stated, that the simplest minds may apprehend the teaching of the Most High; so the sublime doctrines which it promulgates, and the varied testimony on which faith in

those doctrines rest, afford the noblest exercise of the intellectual powers. Nor can human learning have a more glorious application of its skill, than to measure "the breadth, and length, and depth, and height" of that Gospel of mercy which, though offered *especially* to the *poor*, in station as in spirit, is to the rich man his best treasure—to the great man, his highest honour—to the learned (as to you perhaps), his truest wisdom. Bring your learning to bear upon its pages. All which the Gospel asks of the doubter, the sceptic, and the infidel, is, that they would "*search* the Scriptures, whether these things be so[1]." Sound learning, if it begin the inquiry with doubt, will end it with conviction. The keener the criticism applied to the Holy Scriptures, the more brightly is the truth elicited. Inquiry is triumph[2].

[1] "If thou seek wisdom as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; *Then* shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God." Prov. ii. 4, 5.

[2] It should never excite our surprise, that some passages in Holy Writ present themselves to us with a certain degree of ambiguity of expression, which renders them "hard to be understood," by the unlearned. We find that so great is the difference which exists in different minds, so different the view they severally take of the same subject, and so imperfect is language as the appointed medium of conveying ideas between them, that even in the common affairs of life there is frequently much difficulty in clearly understanding the exact purport of expressions and words. How much must this difficulty be increased when the same imperfect medium is used to convey the knowledge of spiritual and eternal things to the capacities of a finite being like man! For though the Holy Scriptures were written under the immediate inspiration and guidance of the Holy Ghost, yet the writers were left to the free use of their own natural faculties and powers, and expressed themselves, every one after his own peculiar manner and habit. Their minds, indeed, were preserved from error, but, as the different styles of the different writers prove, each recorded the truth in his own particular language.

Holy Scripture, however, is beautifully clear in all which relates to life and conduct. Nor, indeed, are the few difficulties which occur on other points without their important uses. They promote humility, by making us feel how unapproachable by a finite creature is the infinite majesty of the Creator—they excite our industry in searching the Scriptures, and so stir up our desire after added knowledge, that "we exercise ourselves in the law of God, day and night." Ps. i. 2. If every page were equally plain, attention might flag, and the mind,

In this your sickness, then, apply your learning to the sacred volume, and you will find treasure which fadeth not, and wisdom which deceiveth not. Let prayer accompany your study. *Love* the *law* of God; you will soon *understand* his *word*, and will find in your own case, what experience has ever shown in the case of others, that in proportion as a good man brings high attainments, and a well-cultivated mind[1] to the study of the Divine oracles, he the more sincerely values them, and the more justly appreciates them.

The Bible may well claim this acknowledgment of its superiority—this testimony to its unparalleled excellencies. Its pages present to us the earliest historical records in existence, and comprehend the most important periods of time, since the creation of the world. We there find the fate of empires and of individuals to have been so ordered by the constant superintendence of an all-seeing and all-ruling Providence, that they have directly, or indirectly, borne ample testimony to Him, as the supreme moral Governor of the universe He created. We there find exhibited clearly the care and provident wisdom, whereby the knowledge of the true religion was preserved through ages of ignorance, and the worship of false gods; we discern the light shining amid the darkness, with contracted ray indeed—but with sure guidance—Jehovah never leaving Himself without witness. There we may learn the first intimation of a Redeemer for a lost world; and there the awful subject

no longer carried higher and higher, as it now is, towards the unattainable knowledge of the true God, as He is, might make to itself other gods, and at last sink to the worship of its own created reason. Whereas now, whilst the faith of the lowly finds in the clear and simple passages of the word of God, truths so wise, so strong, so bright, that leaving to others whatever of difficulties may be found, it has only for itself to receive the truth with gladness; the faith of the wise and learned is kept continually alive by finding always some new gleams of truth, some fresh motive for patience, some brighter ray of hope, some accumulating evidence of the truth as it is in Jesus.

[1] John vii. 17.

of man's corrupt nature—a truth felt by every man, but to be apprehended by no human wisdom, is opened and explained to us. More blessed still; there also the mode in which this corrupt nature may be regenerated, is from the beginning made known to us. The mystery of an incarnate God, whom prophets during successive ages were inspired to foretel—whom angels, at his advent, welcomed to earth—and who lived and died, and rose again for man—is there fully revealed. Fallen man's restoration to his former state is there assured, through the atonement of the promised Redeemer—and the imperfections of his own spirit as a child of Adam, amply compensated by the strength of the Spirit from on high, vouchsafed to him as a child of God. And not only are the great doctrines of a common Preserver, Redeemer, and Sanctifier declared to all men, "without respect of persons," but with those sublime truths are mingled rules of wisdom for directing men in their daily duty to God, their fellow-creatures, and themselves; and whilst every hope of future happiness is referred solely to God's undeserved mercy, through the grace which is by Christ Jesus, a fulfilment of the duties of this life is made one of the conditions of our attaining the happiness of the next: and in the sacred volume, as now read, in your hours of sickness and solitude, undisturbed by the bustle of the world, you discern, with a new mind, its power to instruct "*every man* that cometh into the world[1];" high and low, one with another: and this instruction, though its primary object be to fit us for the enjoyment of a future world of glory, fits us also individually and collectively for this present world of trial. It is indeed in further proof of the gracious superintending care of God over each individual, that not only are general principles of action laid down for mankind universally—every man to do unto others as he would that others should do

[1] John i. 9.

unto him [1]; thereby giving a rule, which, if universally followed, would promote universal "peace on earth, good-will towards men;"—but with a view to our welfare in civil and social life, rules of conduct applicable to each of us individually, whatever be our several differences in station, age, or circumstances, are laid down with a fulness of purpose, and a clearness of object, which both evidences the Divine care for the welfare of society, and sanctifies a conscientious discharge of its duties. Thus, husband and wife, parent and child, master and servant, kings, and all in authority under them, men of *all* ranks, and degrees, and ages, find in the Bible sure precepts to direct them unto the way of a godly and a righteous life: the principle of *responsibility* to *God* accompanying every precept, which in itself might seem to have respect only to our fellow-creatures. "*Husbands*, love your wives, even as *Christ* also loved the *Church* [2]." "*Wives*, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the *Lord* [3]." "*Fathers*, bring up your children in the nurture and admonition *of the Lord* [4]." "*Children*, obey your parents, *in the Lord*." "*Masters*, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have *a Master in heaven* [5]." "*Servants*, be subject to your masters with all fear." "Exhort *servants* to be obedient to their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again; not purloining, but showing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of *God their Saviour* in all things [6]."

Nor are the relative duties of *public* life guarded with less watchful care. Whosoever beareth rule is warned, "Thou shalt not respect persons in judgment; but thou shalt hear the small as well as the

[1] Matt. vii. 12. [2] Eph. v. 25. [3] Eph. v. 22.
[4] Eph. vi. 4. [5] Col. iv. 1.
[6] Tit. ii. 9, 10. St. Paul studiously impresses upon Timothy also, the necessity of inculcating due respect and special honour from Christian servants to Christian masters. 1 Tim. vi. 2.

great; thou shalt not be afraid of the face of man, for the judgment is *God's*[1]." "He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God[2]." To kings, as nursing-fathers of their people—or *children*;—for a good king is a father to his people—the command to search for wisdom is as imperative, as the promise of blessing upon obedience is sure. "When the king sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, the book of the *law* of *God* shall be with him; and he shall read therein all the days of his life, that he may prolong his days in his kingdom—*he* and *his children*[3]." In like manner the *people* are taught, "to be subject to principalities and powers; to obey magistrates[4];" "to honour the king[5];" "to fear the *Lord* and the *King*, and to meddle not with them that are given to change[6];"—so utterly is God's word against those, who, in a spirit of discontent, "are presumptuous and self-willed, and despise government, and are not afraid to speak evil of dignities[7]." Indeed, we must trace to this Divine authority on which our laws rest, that inward reverence towards them, by which, in fact, society is guarded; for they who transgress human laws, are found chiefly among those who have first cast from them all sense of responsibility to the laws of God.

Thus even "the men of this world"—those who unhappily may not yet have been brought to a truly religious life—have no weak motive for regarding the Holy Scriptures with a reverence, which one might fairly think would lead to the study of them.

Are men called to *obey?* Their duty becomes light. They learn from those oracles of truth, that obedience to the laws of man is so closely linked with obedience to the laws of God, that no casuistry can separate the obligation which binds them to obey both[8]: and thus

[1] Deut. i. 17. [2] 2 Sam. xxiii. 3. [3] Deut. xvii. 18, 19.
[4] Tit. iii. 1. [5] 1 Pet. ii. 17.
[6] Prov. xxiv. 21. [7] 2 Pet. ii. 10.
[8] Matt. xxii. 39. "The *second* commandment is *like* unto it—Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

the pride which might scornfully refuse to yield upon mere human authority, should find no difficulty in bending itself to the will of the Supreme.

Are men called to legislate and *bear rule?* It would seem that they should the more gratefully receive the word of the Almighty as an inestimable gift, whereby they find their own authority sustained by motives, which are as far above all human influence, as heaven is higher than earth; motives, whereby alone, order and degree—the great bands which hold together society—can be preserved. Nay, since the higher be the station in life, the greater are its difficulties, and the more weighty its responsibility, the mighty of the earth have the more need of that wisdom which alone can give *sure* guidance through those difficulties, and *sure* counsel to meet that responsibility. Who then is the wise legislator—who the wise ruler—but he who seeks wisdom at the *fountain?* who having gained counsel and strength in communion with his God, is carried safe through all temptations; and rising far above the low and unworthy motives which too often actuate those who look no further than the interests of this world, legislates for his fellow-creatures as one, who must at last give account *for* them and *with* them. Suppose him, in his high station, tempted to forego principle for expediency; tempted to win popularity by pandering to the passions of mankind rather than secure fame by controlling them; and to sacrifice the good of his country, by the dazzling prospect of reaching for himself some higher eminence to which ambition points—suppose him thus tempted, he is armed against the temptation by that wisdom for which he prayed—a wisdom which is at hand with the monitory truth, that for all these things God will call thee to judgment. And what, though the Almighty speaks not to his servants now as to them of old time, by a *voice* out of heaven, He speaketh to them as clearly by his *word* "which came down from heaven," and which the Spirit, that descended from heaven, stamps

upon the hearts of the faithful in letters of living light.

How infinite the wisdom of our God! how unbounded—how gracious his mercy! Behold in the pages of his Word an inexhaustible fountain of wisdom to all men; of *every station*, and under every variety of circumstances! Those sacred pages *fit* us for *this* world—they *prepare* us for the *next*. Is it not a fearful thing to reject their counsel and forsake their guidance?

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## CHAPTER XI.

### PRAYER.

HAVING learned, from a serious study of the sacred Scriptures, the *new* relation in which man stands to the Almighty—not only as created by his power, but redeemed by his love, and sanctified by his grace; dependent, therefore, upon Him for "all those things which are requisite and necessary, as well for the body as the soul"—you will consider that your highest duty and your choicest privilege is *Prayer*. Duty demands that you avow your dependence; whilst to exercise the privilege of approaching *his* presence, whose power, and love, and grace have restored you from your fallen state to the hopes of heaven, would seem the first desire of a soul, alive to the blessing of this new condition. One so blessed is not contented to *feel* the mercy—he is moved to the ardent zeal of the lame man, of whom we read in the Gospel; who, finding his strength restored, "walked and leaped, and *praised* God." That desire is *yours*. You are eager to give *expression* to your entire reliance upon the *power* of your God to sustain the life He gave—upon his *mercy* to save the soul He redeemed—upon the influence of his *grace*, daily to renew the sanc-

tification of which He is the author[1]. Prayer, indeed, containing in itself all the elements of religion, presupposes in us a true knowledge of God and of ourselves; a knowledge of our own wants, and his bounty; of our nothingness, and his perfections; of our own vileness, and his all-sufficiency. Why do we offer the prayer of penitence?—but that we know *ourselves* to be *sinners*, and God to be *faithful* in forgiving us our sins; merciful to pardon, if we truly repent—just to punish if there be no repentance. Why do we plead for pardon in the name of Jesus? but that, while we feel and confess our own unworthiness in the sight of our heavenly Father, we know Him to be the only Saviour of a lost world—the sufficient Saviour—the Saviour ever at hand—the risen Saviour—the ascended Saviour—sitting at the right hand of God, and ever living to make intercession for us. Why do we supplicate grace? but from a deep conviction of our own innate depravity of heart, and from a knowledge that the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, which is the gift of the Father and his Son Jesus Christ[2], is the appointed agent to work with our wills and in our hearts, to the rooting out that depravity, the correcting every evil propensity, and abstaining from all appearance of evil[3]. Why do we implore daily support and protection from on high? but that we know ourselves to be dependent for every moment of our existence on the continued mercy and forbearance of Omnipotence. If the Lord "take away our breath, we die, and are turned again to our earth[4]!" We know also that amid the thousand dangers, seen and unseen, by which we are surrounded, his gracious superintending Providence it is which wards off evil on the right hand and on the left—arming us against the pestilence "which walketh in darkness," and the "sickness which destroyeth in the noon-day." He

[1] There is no truth more strenuously insisted on by our Church than *this*,—that the Holy Ghost is "the Lord and giver of life."
[2] John xiv. 16. [3] 1 Thess. v. 22. [4] Ps. civ. 29.

shields our souls from every "terror by night, and from the arrow which flieth by day [1]."

Nay, further; even when we open the book of life, and "search the Scriptures"—*prayer* to God must accompany our work [2]. We are not able to read for our profit *without* his blessing. Here too our sufficiency is of *Him*. We must gain his Holy Spirit to fix our attention with a teachable disposition upon the sacred oracles. Otherwise, we shall vainly hope rightly to *understand* the wondrous things of his law; value as we ought the good tidings there announced; boldly apply to our sins his threatenings; honestly regulate our life and conduct by his precepts; and animate our repentance by his promises.

Thus, in our search after HIM, who in the natural and the spiritual world; in things in heaven, and things on earth, is the way, the truth, and the life; the true and living God; prayer is our only confidence. Not trusting either to the wisdom of our own understanding, or the resolutions of our own hearts, to keep the right way, we each adopt the noble sentiment of the Psalmist, and pour forth the humble language in which he expresses it—"O give *Thou* me understanding in the way of godliness."

True it is, that the Divine honour is not lessened by our failure in worship. Whether men seek God or forsake Him, his majesty is not lowered; but remains ever in the same infinite greatness. Were the myriads who inhabit this globe to withhold their homage—were there here neither voice nor language heard to his honour; those other worlds which adorn boundless space, would still speak his praise, still declare his power, and evidence his glory. But since

[1] Ps. xci. 5.

[2] It was the bold saying of Luther—"To have prayed well, is to have studied well." The acute Bishop Sanderson expresses this thought admirably—"Study," says he, "without prayer, is atheism; prayer without study, presumption." Surely, the God who *gave* to the mind its powers, may well be sought as the Being who is to *bless* the due and beneficial *exercise* of them.

He deigns to assure us, that He will reward those who obey his laws, and love his commands, and serve Him in true holiness; honouring his name, and promoting his glory, at the same time that they are gaining peace to their souls in life, and hope in death; it would seem hardly possible for man not to rejoice in a service so reasonable—in a duty so blessed.

Does it seem strange to you, that prayer is a necessary duty, because it is *telling* our wants unto a Being who knows them more fully than we know them ourselves; nay, who knows our thoughts *long before?*—In the first place, He bids us thus to ask, in token that we *acknowledge* ourselves dependent upon Him. Even when, of his free grace, He promised mercy and blessing to the house of Israel: "I will yet," said He, "be inquired of by them to do it for them[1]." In the next place, the considerate heart feels, and gratefully owns, that the duty is enjoined for man's benefit. When we pray, there is a pause, at least, in our career of sin, and of worldliness; of danger and of sorrow. Our thoughts are turned inward. We feel our wants, and we feel our inability to supply them. The soul, by this contemplation of its own weakness, becomes humbled—by the approach to the throne of grace purified—and by faith in the presence of Divine aid, strengthened against the evil of this world, and prepared for another and a better. Prayer being thus a divinely-appointed duty as well as a high and gracious privilege, it is difficult to imagine by what sophistry persons of reasonable and intelligent minds can delude themselves to live in the neglect of it: forsaking the assembling themselves together, and forgetting that if "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints," and to be "had in reverence of all them that are round about him[2]"—if even in the place where He hath appointed the mercy-seat, they who approach Him must draw near with great fear and

[1] Ezek. xxxvi. 37. [2] Ps. lxxxix. 7.

reverence—how will fear be turned into terror, and reverence into dismay, when they who despise his mercy, and will none of his counsel here, shall be summoned to appear hereafter at his judgment-seat! when his voice will no longer be the call of mercy, but the voice of offended justice, pronouncing the sentence—the irreversible sentence upon the wicked—"Depart from me, I never knew you!"

How much *wiser* is the humble worshipper, who not for a moment supposing there is either virtue in itself, or benefit to God, in offering holy worship, yet delights in the services of prayer and praise. It is his part not to hide his "righteousness within his heart." He boweth before the Lord his Maker, in outward token of obedience—not backward to evidence publicly the devotion he feels inwardly—not ashamed to confess before men that lowly Saviour, by faith in whom he lives—not impatient of that obedience, which, though in itself valueless, becomes of higher price than all the world could purchase, when made the condition on which rests the gift of the grace of God; even our salvation by Christ Jesus.

Prayer, then, being alike our duty and our privilege, uniting us to our God, I would avail myself of the present season, when sickness gives you opportunity for reflection, to suggest for your meditation some considerations upon the several parts of this duty, as they affect us in public, and in private life; as members of society at large, and as individuals. And first let us meditate upon *public prayer*[1].

[1] The duty of perseverance and importunity in prayer according to God's word, is strikingly set forth in that part of the history of his people, where, in their conflict with the Amalekites, the tide of battle flowed for or against them, as Moses held up his hands in prayer to the God of battle. If, wearied with their continual upraising, he changed their position, though only to repose them for awhile—Amalek prevailed; and so necessary was it for him to resume the *appointed posture* of supplication, that Aaron and Hur, after seating him upon a stone of rest, themselves supported those arms, which must be held up, or the wild and haughty Amalek had desolated Israel; whereas, patience having had her perfect work, faith tri-

## CHAPTER XII.

### PUBLIC PRAYER.

When St. Paul placed Timothy over the Church of Ephesus, his first care, after impressing upon the mind of the youthful bishop the heavy responsibility of his office, was to lay down rules for a right ordering of congregational worship. Those rules are marked with the most wise and salutary caution. Being written, moreover, by the Apostle under the immediate inspiration of the Holy Ghost, they bear an authority which none can gainsay. And mercifully was it provided, that rules on this subject should be stamped with Divine authority, to secure unreserved observance; so only could be established that "unity of spirit," and that "bond of peace," which must be combined in those who would so hold the faith, that it produce the fruits of righteousness before God, and of good will towards men.

As we believe that Christ died for all, so it behoves *all to unite* in acknowledging Him to be the only Saviour. We believe also that through Him flow whatever general blessings are vouchsafed to mankind, nationally as well as individually. Our God is King of kings, and Lord of lords. "By him kings reign, and princes decree justice [1]." Hence, the order which the Apostle directs to be observed in the public worship. "I exhort therefore, that, *first of all*, supplication, prayer, intercession, and giving of thanks, be made *for all men;* for *kings*, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable

umphed, and Moses having obeyed upon the true principle of faith, which leads us to believe, and do the bidding of him in whom we believe, though we comprehend not his counsel—Joshua and the Israelites were strengthened for their work; and "Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword." Exod. xvii. 13.

[1] Prov. viii. 15.

life in all godliness and honesty[1]." Aware of the authority under which the Apostle lays down these directions; aware also, that unless religion be publicly sustained, and the people collectively be "*godly* and quietly governed[2]," the servants of God individually could no longer "serve him in that godly quietness[3]," which is the Christian's highest joy; our Church exhibits, not only in her doctrines, but in her forms of worship, that apostolical character, which she justly claims, as founded upon apostolical authority; and preserves in her service virtually, if not to the very letter, the order laid down by St. Paul. Thus, supplication for pardon—prayers for grace—intercessions or prayers for others through the Redeemer—giving of thanks for all God's goodness and loving-kindness to us and to *all men*,—in how beautiful a conformity with the Apostle's exhortation do these several services follow each the other, and bear the souls of the worshippers to the presence of their God!

If it be within the finite powers of our mind to imagine what the service of angels might be in heaven, we find its type in the congregation of the faithful upon earth. God is in the midst of *them*, even as amid the *heavenly* worshippers. In his presence, whether in heaven or upon earth, is fulness of joy; and when the soul, thus communing with the Most High, is filled with the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, there is no room for evil. The world, with its cares and pleasures, its enmities and its allurements, its sorrows and its joys, is overcome[4].

Mark them more especially, when they meet at the Holy Table of the Lord—partaking of that "most comfortable sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, whereby alone they hope to obtain remission of their sins, and be made partakers of the kingdom of heaven!" Mark them, as by these appointed means, they

[1] 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2. [2] Prayer for the Church militant.
[3] See the Collect for the Fifth Sunday after Trinity.
[4] 1 John v. 4.

strengthen severally themselves and each other in a faith, which no trials shall disturb; a hope, which death itself shall not extinguish; a trust in God, which even his most afflictive dispensations can never weaken[1]; and a spirit of mutual love, which, by fondly cherishing friendship, good-will, and the various sweet charities of life, conquers all enmity, and smooths whatever asperities may occur in social intercourse, by inducing in the heart of the worshipper that deep and humbling sense of his own unworthiness, which best teaches each man to "esteem other better than themselves[2]." These are the promised fruits of peace to the sincere and humble communicant. He is enabled, by the grace given, to live unto righteousness. He exercises the powers of spiritual life. Strengthened and refreshed by the body and blood of Christ, he bears the cross of self-denial, self-control, self-abasement—bravely, resignedly, cheerfully; and exercises every Christian virtue,—"love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance"—with strength unwearied, and with fortitude invincible. "Living in the Spirit"—who shall wonder that he is strengthened "to walk in the Spirit[3]?"

You, my reader, are now perhaps in sickness and pain. It may be, that when in health and ease, you have too often neglected public worship: Oh! how gladly now would you join your fellow Christians! How gladly exchange your sick bed for the house of God, and join the general voice of prayer, and penitence, and praise! Whenever you *have* joined in public worship, I am sure you never shared, unmoved, the holy service of your fellow-worshippers. When supplication was made for forgiveness of sins, how deeply did you feel that *you* needed the pardon prayed for! When the lowly petition for Divine grace ascended from the assembled worshippers, how earnestly did your heart breathe its prayer—that to *you* indivi-

[1] Job xiii. 15. [2] Phil. ii. 3. [3] Gal. v. 22—25.

dually also it might be granted! So, when "intercessions were made for all men," how earnestly did you implore that they might be accepted for you; and when grateful thanksgivings for all the blessings, temporal and spiritual, which flow to mankind through our Lord Jesus Christ, were offered by the assembled congregation, you were encouraged yourself to praise your God, with meek and lowly reverence—encouraged to hope for yourself also, pardon and acceptance and peace here—an earnest that hereafter you might with angel choirs continue, in heaven, the glorious services of earth!

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## CHAPTER XIII.

### FAMILY PRAYER.

Our reflections now pass to the subject of *family* prayer—a duty in itself so important; in its consequences so blessed; in its nature so consonant with every better feeling of the soul; every kindlier affection of the heart—that omission of it often arises rather from want of due consideration, than from deliberate disregard. Indeed, on this point the very heathens of old might instruct us. They had not only their splendid temples wherein the assembled multitudes might meet to worship, but they had also their household altars, before which, blindly indeed, but to themselves beneficially, they and their families daily bowed the knee, and were led by habitual reverence for the *object* of their worship to *do his will*[1].

[1] Rom. ii. 14—16. "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves:

"Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;

"In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my Gospel."

With respect to ourselves as Christians, the habit is so important, that upon a fulfilment or neglect of it as a duty, whereby the seed which the word of God plants in the soul is kept alive and nourished, hangs in no small degree a right performance of our other duties, both religious and social, public and private [1].

Observe its bearings upon a proper performance of the duty of public worship. We know that the Holy Scriptures give express directions as to the frame of mind with which we should join the congregation in their solemn services: that we "give not the sacrifice of fools," but come before the Lord with the *preparation* of "a clean heart, and a right mind [2]." These, and such like directions, not only apply to us, because we all must repose on Jesus Christ as the only Being through whom we can hope that any, the humblest service on our part, can be rendered acceptable; the only Being by whom the heart of the worshipper can be cleansed; meet to receive the mercy of the Most High: but they indicate very clearly, that we must avail ourselves, diligently and watchfully, of every occasion which may present itself, to *prepare* ourselves for a holy worship, with a due reverence towards *Him* whose presence we approach in *public* prayer.

And what occasions so fitting for this preparation, as the duty of *family* prayer? By daily acknowledging in our family the entire dependence of each individual upon Almighty God—daily confessing our many sins and infirmities—daily looking to the Saviour's cross, as the only hope of pardon, reconciliation, and peace—daily imploring grace from on high to cleanse our souls, and purify our affections, and help our infirmities—daily raising our affections to things above, and contemplating that state of heavenly rest, and joy, and glory, which is our inheritance through Christ—by

[1] How distinctly the word of God enjoins a fulfilment of all the social duties as part of our religious duty, has been shown in page 39.

[2] Eccles. v. 1. Ps. li. 10.

this daily service with our families, we foster a spirit of devotion towards God, and good-will towards men, which render us, as far as a fallen and always an imperfect nature can be rendered, meet to offer in the *congregation* the sacrifice of the wise [1]. Where daily devotion is thus habitual in a family, it is not too much to hope, that when they enter the house of God—master and servant, friends and neighbours, parent and child, wife and husband—they all, in their several relations to God and to each other, come before Him,

[1] We all, probably, more or less, lament the frequent wanderings of thought which we are conscious of during congregational worship. We are conscious, also, that these wanderings of thought vary in their character according to the frame of mind in which we attend the house of God.

Sometimes an overpowering calamity has occurred which has sunk our soul in sadness so deep, that not even the cheering voice of the Gospel of peace can raise it. The ear may hear indeed the good tidings; the voice may give utterance to its prayer; we may bend the knee, and bow the head; yet the heart too often finds itself wandering to the scene of sorrow it has left behind. At another time, the mind is perhaps disturbed by a different cause. Prosperity has shone upon us. Joy has gladdened us. Our elastic spirits cannot calmly repose on the solemn services before us. We are borne, involuntarily indeed, but too powerfully, to the scenes of gladness and delight from which the service of our God has called us.

In either of these cases, the soul is withdrawn from that entire devotion which alone can be graciously accepted before the throne of God; nor is there any remedy for this evil except that constant watchfulness of heart, to which a *habit* of prayer trains us, and which, by keeping our view steady to the relative value of the two worlds for which we are created, prevents the soul from being subdued by the sorrows of this world, or its allurements; and directs us to the joys and sorrows of the next. As he who too intently fixes his eye either on the mid-day sun, or the dark midnight, finds that, go where he will, his eye still retains the impressions severally made by the opposite extremes of splendour and gloom: darkness not removing from his eye the dazzling image of the one: noon-day not dissipating the strange dimness of the other—so whenever the mind dwells too intently upon the sorrows and joys of the world, it cannot divest itself of their influence, even where their entrance is unhallowed. Its sorrows still present their gloom; its joys their dazzling.

A complete mastery, indeed, over these infirmities is perhaps impossible for any man. Much, however, may be done to restrain them. Our blessed Saviour has given us, *in one word*, the surest remedy—"*Watch.*" St. Mark xiii. 37.

through their gracious Intercessor, with the requisite *preparation.*

In the family itself, the blessed effects of this duty are hourly felt and evidenced by all. Has there occurred mutual offence? There has been mutual forgiveness: the sun has not gone down upon their wrath. Mutual forbearance gradually becomes a habit in such a family. Fathers learn, whilst they exercise, as they are bound to do, all firmness in correcting what is wrong, to heed the apostolic precept, "not to provoke their children to wrath [1]," but to avoid unnecessary severity; seeing that they have themselves a Father who is in heaven. Children, too, from an habitual sense of living under the eye of an ever-present God, are led not only to love, but to *honour* their parents; lest by disobedience they offend *God. Nature* impels them to *love* the beings to whom they owe nurture and support: *grace* sanctifies this love—no longer allows it to be influenced by the caprice or the will, but fixes it so firmly in the understanding and the conscience, that it is exalted from a *feeling* to a *principle.* Husband and wife are reminded of the high and heavenly motive which the Divine Word holds out, for a due regulation of temper, for mutual forbearance, and unfailing mutual love: "being heirs together of the grace of life, that their prayers be not hindered [2]." With re-

[1] Eph. vi. 4.

[2] 1 Pet. iii. 7. "Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with your wives according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; *that your prayers be not hindered.*"

There is something peculiarly touching in this tender appeal to affection, as a motive for the mutual exercise of Christian graces, in the regulation of their tempers and dispositions towards each other. Many an impetuous spirit, whom no consideration of self could move to restrain anger and curb temper, bends the proud heart to forgiveness, and gentleness, and love, rather than risk failure of blessing to those for whose welfare, in time and in eternity, the soul has been bowed in prayer. So mercifully has He, who was touched with a feeling of our infirmities, provided a remedy for them, in the Scripture, by which his Spirit would thus enforce their correction!

We can all doubtless feel that when parents, in the course of family

spect to the dependents in such a family, what a new and deep interest does the master take in their welfare,

worship, not only pray for themselves, soul and body, but implore the Divine goodness on behalf of their children, absent or present, it is impossible but that the supplication must be sincere. It is equally impossible that sincerity should wilfully place any hindrance between their prayer and its accomplishment. Therefore, though to subdue a feeling of anger, or contempt, or pride, be hard ; be like "cutting off a right hand, or plucking out a right eye," painful even to agony ; yet what parents would not make such a sacrifice for the preservation of their child ? If this thought operates with salutary influence upon the mind amid the common events of life, with what added force does it act, when any special danger threatens—any darker sorrow saddens —when sickness, perhaps, or absence does but the more endear to each other hearts whom kindred love thus binds ? When, for instance, father and mother hang over the sick bed of their child—when their hearts swell nigh to bursting with the secret exclamation, "Would to God I could die for thee, my child !"—if they hope *then* that their prayer be *not hindered*, let them exercise mutual forgiveness of each other's failings, and exhibit that meek and quiet spirit, which is declared to be, in God's sight, of great price.

The same reasoning is applicable, whatever be the immediate object of their prayers. And whenever the appeal in question finds ready response and faith in Him who makes it operative, its fruits will be peace and joy. From hearts so regulated, prayer flows freely, heartily ; there is no weight of a burthened conscience to check its flow—the sin of a divided house * is removed : and hope brightens the soul with a prospect of prayer accepted for the Saviour's sake.

As we pursue these reflections, and find Almighty God turning to our happiness, even here, those very imperfections and infirmities which too often mar the comfort of domestic life, and for the correction of which He therefore condescends to give counsel ; shall his creatures be *themselves* the *hindrance* to their prayers ? *themselves* the obstacle to their blessings ? God forbid ! rather let each seek his own happiness by furthering the happiness of the other.

Thus, is the husband employed in the turmoil of active life, and consequently exposed to its perplexities ? his temper assailed by injustice, or oppression, or fraud, and often rendered unquiet at home by the scenes which have disturbed him abroad ? let a gentle forbearance and deference, as directed by Almighty Wisdom, be rendered unto him by the wife. Nor will the Christian wife be backward thus to exercise that influence, which, when blessed of Heaven, tends to calm disquiet, soothe sorrow, and triumph over the world. The beneficial effects of such influence are intelligible upon the common principles of our nature. Next to the approbation of his own heart, the husband prizes

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* Matt. xii. 25. "And Jesus knew their thoughts. and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation ; and *every* city or *house divided* against itself shall *not stand*."

when he joins with them in common supplications, and views them as beings in whose *eternal* welfare he is concerned! He prays *with* them; he prays for them. He hopes that the services in which he joins with them here, will be continued hereafter, where rich and poor shall meet together before that Lord, who is the Maker of them all [1]." How easy to the master of such a household must come the Divine and gracious command—"Forbear threatening, knowing that *your* Master also is in heaven [2]."

Servants also are thus reminded daily of their appropriate duties, by powerful considerations, well fitted to their capacities, and calculated to sink deeply into their hearts; rendering their service, in all cases, at once easy and happy; for they are encouraged to a conscientious obedience to an *earthly* master, by the cheering reflection that if they do all things as *unto God*, their *heavenly* Master, they will of Him be *finally* recompensed. Hence a truly religious servant enjoys a contented spirit; shows a cheerful obedience; is "subject to his master with all fear." Nay, even when a master may be harsh, the Christian servant "answereth not again:" because the Gospel teaches him to obey "not only the good and gentle, but also the froward [3]." And the grace of self-control, whether in master or servant, passeth not unheeded by Him,

that of one who has become his second self, and of which he cannot feel deprived without pain and disquiet.

So, the weakness and tenderness of frame which render the wife unequal to the more arduous bustle of life, are adduced by God as the very reason why the husband should *honour* her. Her very weakness is thus to be her strength. Indeed, it is one of the many beautiful instances of a Divine Wisdom ordering the constitution of our minds, that in proportion as any object of our affection requires especial care and attention, we are so far from wearying in our work and labour of love, that we are more and more cheerful in it. How else would the wife and mother, often of weak and tender bodily frame, tend with a patience unwearied the sick bed of husband and children? Where love is, labour is delight—and where most of care and affection are needed, there the Christian rejoices to bestow it in its fullest measure.

[1] Prov. xxii. 2. [2] Eph. vi. 9. [3] 1 Pet. ii. 18.

whose eye seeth the *heart;* and *in whose book* unrighteousness and *righteousness* are alike recorded [1].

Is it too much to hope, that the Divine blessing will shadow such a household, and that the grace for which they pray, will be vouchsafed to them severally, for the fulfilment of their duties to God, their neighbour, and themselves? A family thus united in prayer—husband, and wife, and children, and master, and servants, and "the stranger within their gates," all joining in common supplication at the Divine mercy-seat—how can they forbear having a lively feeling for the eternal interests of themselves and each other, and a deep sense of the duties which they owe to one another? Hence, masters learn to be gentle, servants respectful, children dutiful, parents kind but firm towards their children. Husband and wife are of one heart and one mind. Friends and neighbours vie in mutual good offices. Happy they, who, placed by God's providence as heads of their families, adopt the feeling of the pious Joshua, and emulating his noble decision take up his worthy resolve, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord!"

Thus we find that an uniform fulfilment of this duty not only forms an admirable preparation for public worship in the congregation—each individual of such a household bringing to the public services a mind disciplined and practised in the Christian graces of repentance and faith and hope before God—but it lays the foundation of peace and good-will towards *men.* Hard, indeed, must that heart be, which, after the affecting service of family prayer, can in its intercourse with society injure another, in thought, word, or deed [2].

[1] Rev. xx. 12. "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book* of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, *according to their works.*"

[2] It has sometimes been urged upon me, when recommending family prayer, that many who adopt it show not in their life the corresponding fruits of the Spirit—"love, joy, peace." Their temper in the home circle is still uncurbed; and in society they yield to pride, or anger,

Such a service, offered with an honest and true heart, *must* foster in us that charity which doeth unto others as we would they should do unto us—bearing all things; believing all things; enduring all things; and loving all men, because our Saviour loved them and died for them. Envy can have no root in a heart so exercised; there, hatred surely must die; and the love of God being sown in the heart, love of our neighbour so groweth up together with it, that "our conversation is in heaven[1]." Peace is in our dwellings, and amongst us. There is no "rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing; but contrariwise, blessing;" knowing "that we are thereunto called," that we should "inherit a blessing[2]."

or ill-will, when occasion may kindle those feelings, as quickly as the more worldly among their neighbours.

Now suppose this to be sometimes the case. It is no marvel, that hypocrisy should exist now as it has done aforetime, in every age of the church; and that amongst the vast variety of human characters in a fallen world, there should be some who mock their Christian duties, and abuse their Christian privileges. There *may be* those, who thus mask their real character; who pray for blessings on their fellow-creatures one hour, and the next slander their fame, and wound their peace, and unscrupulously by word and deed injure them. Thus to act, is, indeed, a dreadful sin. But we may fairly leave those hypocrites to the misery of their own consciences; the secret upbraiding of their own envious hearts; and to that heart-searching God, who declares, that "for every idle word which men speak, they shall give account in the day of judgment." Verily, they have their reward; though the end be not yet. The duty of family prayer is not less binding, because some perform it in an evil heart; nor are its blessings in themselves less sure to the sincere and faithful worshipper, though some may choose to forfeit them.

[1] Phil. iii. 20. [2] 1 Pet. iii. 9.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### PRIVATE PRAYER.

By *public* and *family* prayer, our watchfulness is excited to *private* prayer. We have all, doubtless, some sorrows and cares, some fears, some hopes, spiritual and temporal, which we can lay open to our God only. The heart, under a deep sense of unworthiness, is perhaps well-nigh sinking under a sorrow which nothing can soothe or mitigate, but a firm and unshrinking reliance on the mercy of an Almighty and reconciled God. Sin, felt at last as the great burden of life, becomes a weight of care, too heavy for our endurance: "the burden of it is intolerable[1]." We seek for one to bear the weight for us; and we are permitted to cast all our burden—all our care upon the Lord. He has promised to sustain us. He, who on the cross bare the sins of the whole world, will bear for us our iniquities now. The fear, therefore, under which in our penitence we labour, as we contemplate our own vileness in the sight of a pure and holy God, is "cast out by that perfect love," with which an awakened mind contemplates the mercies of the Redeemer. Hope, built upon this faith, stands firm, however it be assailed. Knowing in whom we have believed, we are persuaded that "he is able to keep that which we have committed to him, to that day"—able to keep our souls in safety to the day of final judgment; and will then be, as we humbly trust, mercifully ready to claim them as his own.

It has doubtless been thine, O reader, often to have experienced the strength which the soul thus acquires

[1] See the affecting and heart-searching form of confession in the Communion Service.

by a closer communing with God in prayer; and whenever, in obedience to the commands of thy Saviour, thou hast "entered into thy closet, and shut to the door, and prayed to thy Father which is in secret [1]," thou hast felt, that St. Paul directs to no presumption or vain confidence, when he bids us "be strong in the *Lord*, and in the power of *his* might."—Surely it is a glorious privilege thus to cast our burden upon the Lord.

Nor is the benefit which the soul derives from this communion with the Lord, confined to the strength supplied for a due discharge of duty towards God. It is co-extensive with the whole range of duty towards man also; giving grace to help in *every* time of need; preparing the soul for God, and regulating the heart for man. Do worldly troubles accumulate and misfortunes press heavily? God is at hand: "a *very present* help in the needful time of trouble [2]." Does disappointment confound our prudence and defeat our exertions in an honest course of industry? God—the Being to whom we have poured out our soul in prayer, and whose promise is firm that He will hear and answer our prayer—He is at hand to control

[1] When our Lord, in this Scripture, condemns a *public display* of the act of prayer, it is plain to common sense, that He does not forbid either a public avowal of our faith, or a public expression of our supplications. Curse, deep and heavy, is denounced against those who are not always ready to make confession before men of the faith and service they profess towards their Lord and Saviour Christ. Indeed, He Himself, both by precept and example, enjoins the habit of public prayer, in terms and in manner too clear to be misunderstood. The lesson He teaches is *this:* that as the blessings which we share in common with our fellow-creatures demand united thanksgiving, and as our mutual wants demand that in our congregation, we, with one accord, make our common supplications for the supply needed; so for our individual sorrow—our more secret wants and wishes, we should in secret open our hearts unto the Lord; encouraged by the promise that the Lord, "who seeth in secret, shall reward us openly." His object is to expose self-righteousness, and hypocrisy, and a proud display in religion,—not to condemn the openness of Christian courage.

[2] Ps. xlvi. 1.

all things, and to make them *work together* for good, to them who love and fear Him[1]. We, therefore, calmly "commit our way unto the Lord." Does sickness cramp our exertions, and bring with it accumulated sorrows—worldly concerns neglected, and worldly prospects blighted? Prayer has so strengthened our faith in the Lord, who chasteneth whom He loveth, and scourgeth whom He receiveth, that we repose fearlessly upon his mercy to us; and in the midst of affliction, "stay ourselves upon our God." Are friends removed by death? or, bitterer still, the cup of sorrow! are they found faithless? In either case, Prayer is our consolation. "Henceforth," says our blessed Saviour to his obedient servants, "Henceforth, *I* call you *friends*[2]." Say, can that heart be desolate, even though it may know the want of an earthly friend, which by earnest prayer has found a heavenly friend, whose love is without measure, and whose power knows no limit?

The strength, thus by prayer imparted to the soul, so elevates it, that the various perplexities even of social life cease to disturb the calm with which it has learned to view all earthly things.

Be assured, that you will find this to be invariably the happy consequence of thus seeking your appointed refuge and defence. Has envy rendered you a mark against which the disappointed and malicious direct their venomed darts? You are in armour proof—having on the armour of *God*. So armed, you stand firm; disregarding danger, and looking for the accomplishment of your warfare; when to your unprincipled foes their envy and their hatred must perish[3], but when the graces which you exercise—a patient faith,

[1] Rom. viii. 28. [2] John xv. 15.

[3] Eccles. ix. 5, 6. "For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten.

"Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in *any* thing that is done under the sun."

a courageous forbearance, and a firm reliance on Him to whom you were "instant in prayer"—shall have their rich reward. Is the despitefulness of the proud directed against you; do they maliciously "speak peace, having war in their hearts?"—living unto God, you have learned to feel yourself more unworthy in his sight, than even they can think you; and the feeling has been salutary; for it at once renders you invulnerable to the pride and malice of the scornful. You think of *yourself* more and more humbly, and *them* you have learned to pity. Even in this world you live unto God; and to live with Him in the next is all your hope and all your care. The hour is ever present to your mind when the proudest will be laid low, and must be contented to dwell in the grave; where "their love, and their hatred, and their envy" will, as to their object, though not as to their responsibility, be alike forgotten.

Thus, the habit of *private* prayer is every way blessed. Like a watchful guard, it will prevent your being surprised into despair by sudden calamity. It will shield you against the allurements of prosperity. Your soul will be strengthened for its duties towards God and man, and however the storm may rage outwardly—within, all will be still. Serenity will mark your course; "there will be repose" to your soul amid even sickness, sorrow, and death.

Indeed, you must be aware that there is sure blessing to those who are sincere in this duty. How else can you account for the fact which you must often have observed, that when good people are in affliction, whether of mind, body, or estate, they evince none of that impatience—none of that murmuring and repining which, under similar circumstances, agitate worldly minds? Of this firmness under trial, as the result of a prayerful life, St. Paul has left us a very memorable instance in his own example. He speaks of himself as tried with greater severity than any even of the

Apostles [1], but all could not move him from his stedfastness. So far was he from complaining of accumulated sorrows, that his faith but grew the firmer. His trust in the Divine mercy to bring them *finally* to a happy issue, continually strengthened. He was assured that they would work for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; and, therefore, he was enabled "to *rejoice* even in his afflictions." So, if your *heart* habitually seeks God in prayer, "watching thereunto [2]," nothing will separate you

[2] 2 Cor. xi. 23.

[2] It is a remarkable fact, that when any sudden accident or unforeseen calamity overtakes men, not only do the *righteous* flee to their heavenly Father for refuge; but even the *most wicked* are then surprised into an involuntary acknowledgment of the constant presence and superintending providence of God, and of his tender mercy over all his works. You may, yourself, have observed what the writer has had occasion sometimes to witness, the emphatic exclamation of one *suddenly* afflicted,—Lord Jesus, have mercy on me!—bursting from lips all unused in the days of health and safety to utter his holy name, or to pray for his grace, or to acknowledge Him as God.

The fact seems indeed to involve a contradiction. It is, however, but too easily reconcilable with the inconsistencies of a fallen nature. Pride of heart is as much the sin of the wicked in these days, as it was the sin of our first parents at the fall. Hence it is, that many, who are too proud to own themselves followers of a meek and lowly Saviour, yet cherish a secret hope that in some or other way, which they leave to Him, and at the same time which they leave to chance, his mercy will at last be extended to them. This is a peculiarly awful state of the soul. What deception must these persons practise—deceiving themselves as well as others *! At the very time they are living in their wickedness, in opposition to the will and the commandments of God, they believe in his power and mercy, that both are unbounded; and, during the years which they have passed rejecting the notion of a Saviour, and perfectly regardless of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, they must have had inward convictions, which they stifled, and warnings from the Spirit, which they heeded not. They thus give proof what continued resistance must have been made to the good motions of God's Spirit, as it strives with man

* Isa. xliv. 20. "He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?"

Surely the Prophet's portraiture of such an one is drawn too faithfully.

from the covenanted love of your Redeemer; nothing remove you from the consolatory truth, that, as your heavenly Father is with you *always*, so He is more *especially* with you, when most you require his gracious presence. In the time of our tribulation, therefore, when there is none else to help us, *then* may we rejoice in our ever-present God. Nay, our blessed Lord teaches us to adopt this sentiment so entirely, that if it were possible now, as in the days of persecution, that nearest relatives and most attached friends should forsake and betray us to prison and to death—God would supply their place.

It is the feeling that we are ever in the presence of an all-powerful, all-wise, all-loving God, and ever under his care; which calms the turbulence of grief, arms against every fear, sustains under every trial, and leads us, by faith, to repose on that promise of peace, "which the world giveth not," but which is the assured gift of God through Jesus Christ his Son. Cherish, then, this feeling! Cherish it by "praying to thy Father, who is in secret." You will find that "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and put their trust in his mercy," and that this "peace of God" is the "joy with which the stranger" to religion "intermeddleth not." Worldly minds cannot

against the corruption of an evil heart. The Spirit striving with them—then only gets the mastery, when, in the hours of sickness or peril, resistance is relaxed, as it were, and the near approach of Divine judgment prompts the cry for mercy. They little think, in their wicked state, what a powerful testimony they bear—more powerful, because unintentional—to their secret belief in the infinite mercies of the Most High. Now, if *they*, whose whole life is a continued endeavour after holiness and peace, dare not look that mercy be extended to themselves, except through the undeserved merits of the gracious Redeemer, let the wicked seriously consider the awful peril in which they place themselves—let them cease to "grieve the Spirit of God;" "the Spirit will *not always* strive with man*." Let them ask themselves the reasonable question—"If the righteous *scarcely* be saved, where shall the *ungodly* and the *sinner* appear?"

* Gen. vi. 3.

understand this truth; but the fact is not less sure. Their unbelief cannot make the truth of God of none effect; cannot rob the soul of that strengthened faith, that renewed courage, that brightened hope, which it derives from secret converse with its God, and from a devout outpouring of its wants and wishes, accompanied with supplication for mercy, grace, and comfort. You rise from this duty with a strength, not your own indeed, but yours by covenant; a strength which enables you in the midst of trials, temporal and spiritual, to adopt the firm language of the patriarch: "It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good."

Nor suppose, for a moment, that this high feeling will disqualify you for the duties of active life. So far from it, that in proportion as your mind is clear of worldly fears, and moderated as to worldly wishes, and set upon attaining holiness of thought, rectitude of conduct, and a right judgment in all things, you will pass to your duties with renewed zeal towards God, with renewed good will towards man—armed by Divine grace for the exercise of those Christian virtues for which you feel your own insufficiency. Holding fast by God, "you will watch unto prayer;" and as trials of temper arise—unlooked-for occasions suddenly calling forth anger, or disappointment, or grief —you will offer, in the moment of difficulty, the prayer of the heart, that present aid may be granted by your present God. The prayer of the heart!—how often is it the secret to the Christian of that *strength* which turns resolve into practice; of that *wisdom* which gives to zeal discretion, and to caution, courage; of that *patience* which submits without a murmur to the Divine will; and of that *faith* which, in life and health bravely leaves events to the great Ruler of all; in sickness learns submission to the chastening of Heaven; and in death, welcomes the hand which is to set the captive free!

And though, neither in private devotion, nor in family worship, nor in the congregation of the faithful,

are we to look in these days, as in days of old, for the glories of a visible Shechinah; though we are not to expect any direct token of the presence of the Holy One; none pray in sincerity, but that the light of the Spirit is poured into their souls; bearing testimony, that God heareth and answereth them; so enlightening their understanding, so purifying their affections, so regulating their whole heart and mind, that *He* leaveth not Himself without witness. Say, O my reader! You have, perhaps, had sorrows of the heaviest kind; they had well-nigh confounded you. I picture you to myself as then falling low on your knees before the presence of Him who is invisible—no eye upon you, save the eye of your God! You opened your whole heart before Him—you attempted no secret holding back of sins, negligences, and ignorances—you allowed your soul no reservation of its infirmities: "you poured out your heart by yourself." The answer whispered peace; and you arose from your supplication, strengthened for the exercise of every grace, which the appointed trial might call forth; and so you went on your way rejoicing. And who shall wonder at that joy? You had been communing with an omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent Being; the great Eternal, who is from everlasting to everlasting. You knew Him *able* to give all which you could ask, and *willing* to give all which you could desire: for He has proved his unbounded love by giving his Son to die for you. You knew Him as a loving Father, who declares that sooner shall the nursing mother forget her sucking child, than He forget you [1]. Well may you have rejoiced in that blessed communing! It was indeed to have overcome the world, and to have had your conversation in heaven [2].

[1] Isa. xlix. 15. "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, *they may* forget, yet will *I not* forget thee."

[2] Phil. iii. 20.

What, then, though we cannot burst the bands which hold us here to earth? What though we cannot ascend up where the Almighty dwelleth in his own bright glory unapproachable? *He*—wondrous thought!—*He* cometh down to us [1].

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## CHAPTER XV.

### THE HOLY SPIRIT OF GOD.

To encourage fallen creatures thus to place themselves in the more immediate presence of their Creator, and in prayer to bring before Him their hopes and fears, their wants and wishes; their sins, negligences, and ignorances; the Son of God has revealed the knowledge of the Holy Spirit, as the Being through whom the Almighty will hold communing with them. "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that *He* may abide with you *for ever*, even the Spirit of truth;" "He shall teach you all things [2]." This Being it is who sanctifies us by his gracious influence; counsels us by his heavenly wisdom; and teaches us by his holy inspiration; dwelling in our souls as in a temple [3]. So that whatever fears might arise to deter us from daring to approach one so vast, so pure, so unsearchable, as the great Creator, those fears are subdued, by the assurance, that this Comforter will be with us in all our services, and "abide with us always:" his consolations and assistance more especially attending us in our prayers [4].

[1] James iv. 8. "Draw nigh to God, and *He will draw nigh to you.*"
[2] John xiv. 16. 27.
[3] 1 Cor. iii. 16. "Know ye not that ye are the *temple of God?*"
[4] Rom. viii. 26. "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."

St. Paul's language in this passage is peculiar and strong; still it

Yet to watch the current of human affairs, and observe men borne along it, as chance seems to drive, and interest propels; the sport of every gale, which their own passions or a restless world may direct against them; seeking rest and finding none—who could for a moment suppose, that those very beings were privileged to have the guidance of a heavenly Counsellor, and the consolations of a heavenly Comforter; able and willing to steer them safely and bring them to the haven where they would be[1]?

This neglect of the Holy Spirit of God must be traced in two chief causes. Men either live without God in the world; or if they profess to believe in his presence, they are uninfluenced by their profession: their faith, being without works corresponding thereto, is dead; they remain unmoved by a sense of dutiful obedience in their spiritual relation to Him, and seem altogether indifferent to their eternal existence as spirits which can never die, Absorbed in providing things necessary for the body, they forget, or rather disregard, those things which are necessary for the soul.

I would now, therefore, O my reader, resume with you that holy communing, to which a season of sickness more especially invites you, and which naturally disposes to a more serious and earnest consideration of

is perfectly consistent; being addressed to man, as a creature, who though an occupant of a perishable body, is yet himself an imperishable spirit, and worships a God, who, being the Eternal Spirit, can be discerned only spiritually. What an inestimable blessing then it is, that the power of the Spirit of God helpeth the infirmities of our spirit, aiding us in our services of prayer, and penitence, and praise, with "groans which cannot be uttered!"—language seems labouring for terms sufficiently strong to express the earnest and entire zeal and sympathy with which this aid is given.

These thoughts tend highly to encourage the spirit of the contrite ones. Finding their refuge and their hope in prayer, they commit all to the mercy of their gracious Advocate, Jesus Christ, who, sitting at "the right hand of God, ever liveth to make intercession for them."

[1] Ps. cvii. 30.

the soul and heavenly things—of the eternal interests of the one, and the ground of your hopes as to the other.

Indeed, withdrawn as you now are from the active duties of life, and your meditations more free to take a new direction; let us proceed to contemplate the nature of your *mind* upon which the Spirit of God is to act. And who of us can forbear wonder and amazement, when we retire into ourselves, and study that mind, which in fact constitutes the man, and links him with the intelligences of a spiritual world? We find it endued with certain powers distinct from those of the body; and though in a degree sympathizing with them, not necessarily dependent upon any objects of sense. It has the power of recalling the past, and, by comparing the past with the present, is able, in some degree, to anticipate the future. It is capable of the most varied emotions. You can feel the keenest woe, or the liveliest joy: be depressed by fear, or elated by hope: be moved by the kindliest feelings, or agitated by the fiercest passions; yet no outward object shall be apparent to excite these emotions. Again, you can, by the mere exercise of the mental faculties, carry your thoughts to the most distant parts of the earth, can communicate with the minds of the absent, as the writer of these pages now communicates with you: can bear your wishes even to the heaven above, and commune, at this moment, with the invisible God who dwelleth there, yet no voice shall utter a sound, no movement indicate the thought, no visible presence break the solitude.

Now these observations show, that the mind or spirit of man has as surely and as fully its own spiritual powers, as the body has its own corporeal powers; and as in the exercise of those powers consists spiritual life, so *that* life must be sustained by the Creator, equally with the life of the body. He only can sustain it. It is clear that the strength of either must depend upon the continued care of the Being who created both.

Why, then, should it seem more strange that our spiritual life is preserved and strengthened by the gifts of the Spirit, communicated in answer to prayer, than that the life of the body is sustained by the means thereto appointed? or rather, What more natural than to expect this to be the case? The mode in which life is given and preserved to plants and animals, that they may become food for the support of man, and the manner in which that food so supplied is made to nourish the body, are in themselves as far above our comprehension; and, in reality, constitute as great a mystery, as the mystery of the Holy Spirit being able to give spiritual life, and to sustain it when given. Whoso then would successfully engage in the duties of spiritual life; exercising himself in repentance and faith before God; in good will towards men—checking evil tempers, practising the Christian graces, bearing patiently some heavy cross perhaps, and denying himself for the Saviour's sake—let him, in prayer to God, seek the promised aid of the Holy Ghost, the Sanctifier, the Counsellor, and promised Comforter, that so all the energies of his mind may be sanctified in their exercise, gain for themselves a right direction, and be strengthened by that power, which alone can either give them, or bless them.

It is very important that we thus understand both the reasonableness and obligation of strengthening our own spirit by the Spirit of God. Reason and revelation declare the same truth. He who either does not, or will not allow the importance of this great Christian work, fails as well of comfort and counsel as of holiness. And no wonder. Like our first parents, he "leans to his own understanding," and, allowing *that* to supersede the word of Divine Wisdom, falls from hope as they did. Pride—whatever be its source; whether wealth, or station, or intellect—"Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall."

Not so the second Adam. Having taken upon

Him our nature, and being touched with the feeling of our infirmity; He, the meek and lowly Jesus, denied not to avail Himself of such aid as his heavenly Father should provide to help man's infirmity. Therefore was it, that He not only deigned to take the Holy Spirit as his guide, when He went to his temptation in the wilderness; but, for our example, did on every future occasion of approaching difficulty and danger, flee to prayer for the same gracious aid. Shall, then, any among men, who are all born in sin, suppose themselves strong enough, and good enough to live without such sanctifying aid? Surely, if ever mind was clear to follow, unassisted, the course of duty; if ever heart was strong in virtue, to stand alone in its resistance to evil, that heart and that mind were in Christ Jesus; in whom was no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; for though He made Himself of no reputation, but was made in the likeness of man, yet thought He it not robbery to be equal with God. Still even this Holy One did not choose to leave unassisted the nature He had taken—He strengthened it by the aid of the Spirit. So do ye. In all humility and thankfulness accept the gift of the Holy Spirit of God, in aid of such powers as your own mind may supply, for guarding you against evil, and leading you to what is good. The admirable adaptation of this Spirit to its purpose is clearly shown by the very terms in which the promise of it is couched—"I will pray the Father," said our blessed Redeemer, "and he shall give you *another* Comforter, that *he* "may abide with you *for ever*." It is plain, that during his sojourn upon earth, Jesus was *Himself* the Comforter; or why is the Spirit spoken of as *another?* but He could not, in his human nature, as man, advantageously *abide* with his people: it was rather to their advantage—"*expedient*" for them, as He expresses it—that He went away, in order that He might undertake the office of their intercessor at the right hand of God, in heaven; and so *complete* the gracious

work of their redemption. "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." The counsel, the guidance, the comfort which his immediate followers derived from his personal presence as God the Son, during his short abode in the flesh, his followers now are to look for in the invisible but constant presence of God the Holy Ghost. And though in the days of strength and health, your own powers seemed sufficient to guide you into the path of rectitude and peace, you have on your sick bed learned better things. Life wears away; death approaches; anxious thoughts press upon your heart, as to the *future* world; and however self-flattery may persuade men sometimes to think themselves free from charge of blame before their fellow-creatures in the concerns of time; none, whose minds disengage themselves from merely earthly views, can yield to the same flattering notions, as they prepare to render up their accounts in an eternal world before a heart-searching God. When, therefore, you pause to ask yourself—What shall I answer to *my God* in judgment?—all your own wisdom can devise no satisfactory reply; you feel that even your own righteousness is indeed, as the prophet declares, utterly worthless—valueless—whilst a remembrance of accumulated offences before the Almighty crowds upon your agitated thoughts, and bows you down with sadness. Amid these sinkings of heart, man longs for some voice to give *sure* counsel; some spirit to breathe *abiding* consolation; some power which may speak peace, with an *authority* none shall gainsay. Alas! *then*, for the despiser of the Spirit of God. The world gives no such counsel, affords no such consolation, claims no such authority; and to the *appointed* Comforter he is himself a *stranger*. Oh! the utter woe of a heart thus desolate! Be thou of wiser resolve. Cherish the privilege free to thee, of seeking this Comforter in prayer. Seek, and thou shalt find—find Him with rich blessing to thy soul; in life, in death, in judg-

ment. May He, who hath bid us all thus seek, and whose bidding, thou wilt, I trust, obey, prosper thee in thy obedience! May He hear, and answer, and bless thee!

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## CHAPTER XVI.

### ON THE SPIRIT.

The Holy Spirit of God, being thus the appointed helper of man's infirmities, it may be well to consider the principle upon which we may hope a successful result from the aid He supplies.

Now the general tenor of the word and counsel of God, and all analogy from his gracious dealings with his creatures, evidence that the principle is that of co-operation—the "Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit." Indeed, it is by keeping in view this principle, that all difficulties upon the subject at once vanish before the inquiries of the humble reader of his Bible. True it is, that in the writings of St. Paul there are apparently opposite declarations. But upon examining the occasions which called them forth, the parties to whom they were made, and the immediate object which the Apostle had in view at the time, we find that they are virtually not only unopposed to each other, but perfectly consonant. The particular declaration stands often alone, in order that their whole weight may bear exclusively upon the particular evil to be resisted, and so correct the views of those who hold opposite and extreme opinions. Thus, where the Apostle found men either from pride of heart rejecting the doctrine of sanctification by the Holy Ghost, and trusting for guidance to their own unassisted reason; or from a worldly indifference disregardful of his influence;—*there* he met the offence by a distinct and monitory warning, that whilst indifference palliates not neglect, reason itself is vain

without a holy faith in the unseen but all-pervading Spirit of God: for "we have no power to think any thing as of ourselves; our *sufficiency* is of *God*." Again, where his converts received that word with joy, but perverted the truth to the neglect of social and religious duties, on the plea that sanctification being of God, man might leave the work to Him; *there* his language assumed a bolder tone, and had a more direct bearing upon the opposite though not opposing duty of a holy conduct; deprecating, in most energetic terms, so awful a perversion of the truth—"Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? *God forbid.*" Rather, as he emphatically observes, "we are created in Christ Jesus *unto good works*"—a holy life being the very characteristic of our profession. Lest, however, any should continue in their mistake, and not see, that in thus specifying a particular truth, he places it in opposition to its corresponding error—neither sanctioning other errors, respecting which he is silent, nor lowering other duties, of which he makes no mention—he sometimes so frames his address, that the very precept bears its own explanation. Take, for instance, his memorable counsel to the Philippians: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling: *for*—it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." In this passage the co-operation upon which must depend a successful issue to our holy work, is distinctly insisted upon. Man's share in it is first stated, broadly and firmly, both as to its object and its manner. The object is no less than the soul's salvation; whilst the work is to be performed with fear and trembling—feelings which befit the agent, not only from a humbling view of his own utter powerlessness to labour successfully if left to himself; but also from a conviction, that if, with such aid as is promised to co-operate with him, he should fail of his purpose, the failure will be his own, with all its unutterable woe: remorse, bitter and unavailing. Wherefore, though humility well becomes

man when he prepares for this work of a holy and religious life, he must not allow humility to degenerate into listlessness and inaction.—Nay, part of his fear must lead him to active obedience, because, since God will work with him and for him, *inaction* is *sin*. He *therefore* is not slothful in business, but fervent in spirit: bearing in mind the further truth, that "God's strength is made perfect in man's weakness."

All analogy from God's dealings with his creatures declares the same principle of co-operation in attaining blessing. Look to the mode by which, age after age, the bountiful Creator has given food to his creatures. He giveth his sun to shine, and his rain to descend, and the different seasons in their order, whilst the anxious fears of men, when ungenial seasons occur, sufficiently testify their belief, that the sustentation of the universe itself entirely depends upon God. Yet who would expect to reap the fruits in harvest, if, under pretence of an exalted trust in the Creator's goodness, man were to fold his hands in slothfulness, and refuse to labour? The light, and air, and rain, and dew would still pour their influence over the earth, but who so presumptuous as to expect that the land should yield her increase? Hence it is that men do labour; hence, that they work out a successful issue to their hopes by toiling with skill and patience —rising early, and late taking rest. See them at early dawn going to their work and their labour until the evening! They cultivate the soil, and sow therein the seed, and watch its growth, till when the promised season[1] arrives, they look that the harvest give full increase. The *work* is of God, and man co-operating: the *successful issue* is solely of God. How strange, then, that in the greater work of his salvation, man should err! Prone to extremes, he will *then* do *all* the work himself; or he will do none.

[1] Gen. viii. 22. "While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease."

Let it not be so with you. Avoiding these equally fatal extremes, thankfully accept the proffered assistance of the Holy Spirit to aid your spirit in its daily work of working out your salvation. And however deep humility may fill your heart when you contrast the work to be effected with your own natural weakness and insufficiency, be but the more ready to flee to that divine and omnipotent hand, ever stretched out to give the support you need; and so supported, go on your way rejoicing; "for," adds St. Paul, "it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure." However, therefore, he who trusts solely to the power of his reason, or the strength of his intellect, or the goodness of his intentions, or the rectitude of his life, to work out his salvation, will fail in his purpose, and remain as powerless to calm the fury of his passions, and to still the whisperings of his conscience, as to grasp the wind, or direct the whirlwind; he who, whatever be his wisdom, his power, or his goodness, trusts to neither, but exercises them always with dependence upon the sure and heavenly aid of the Spirit, will find himself so strengthened for the work, that in the daily exercise of those graces, in which consist the labour of a Christian life, he will be enabled gradually to accomplish his work, and may hope to exchange a life of patient spiritual toil here, for a life of undisturbed rest and joy hereafter.

The principle here laid down, is that upon which holy men of old have ever acted. Was their faith in divine aid strong?—It but excited a livelier diligence in every good word and work. Upon that very faith was built their holy life—upon that, their hope of a happy death. Like the reaper, when his daily work is done, they reposed in a peaceful trust, that their heavenly Father, who had vouchsafed them strength for the work, would of his love and grace, bless it to full increase. Thus work out your own salvation; struggling against evil, and striving after that which is good; and never weary in your well doing. Thou

also shalt reap, if thou faintest not, for the same God which blesseth man's labour in the fields rich for harvest, worketh with you and for you, in labouring for a spiritual harvest.

If, in pursuing this subject, the distinct question recurs to your mind; and, seeking a more specific reply to it than may be gathered from the observations already made, you ask "To what extent may I individually look for this assistance?"—the word of God supplies the answer.

With respect to the measure of assistance which we may individually expect to receive from the Holy Spirit in answer to prayer, we have reason to believe from the sacred oracles, that it will be exactly proportionate to our need; the supply of grace, like that of the manna in the wilderness, knowing neither deficiency nor superabundance. Preserving, throughout, the principle of co-operation, our heavenly Father would seem so to regulate his assistance, that it should never supersede the necessity of full exertion on our own part. When trials press lightly, we are not to look for a larger measure of aid, than is needful to make our own efforts successful. When they weigh down the soul with heaviness, and become "a burden too heavy for man to bear," *then* the strength of our God is made perfect in our weakness; and support, apportioned to the occasion, is at once applied. The promise to Asher is still the promise to all in covenant with Israel's God—"As thy days, so shall thy strength be [1]."—As added years bring added trials, so shall thy

[1] Deut. xxxiii. 25. Asher was one of the sons of Jacob. The inheritance portioned out for his children lay in a beautiful district; extremely fertile; sheltered from the north by the Mount Libanus, and having to the south of it Mount Carmel, with the fertile valley of Jezreel, along which was spread the tribe of Issachar. Its local advantages were manifold: not the least of which must be reckoned its possession of the strong and famous city Tyre; with the celebrated harbour of Ptolemais. Thus strengthened in every way, it bid fair to maintain an evident superiority among the tribes. Yet vain are the highest worldly advantages to us, collectively or individually, unless

soul gain added strength to bear them. And well does the page of sacred history testify to this truth. Look to the patriarchs in their patient waiting; look to the prophets in their wondrous firmness of faith, which no doubts could weaken, no dangers terrify, no disappointments shake; look to the noble army of martyrs in their seasons of woe; to the followers of the crucified Jesus—men in their old age—women in their tenderness—view them victorious over persecution, death, tortures! How did they support the torments of fire and sword, and the exquisite cruelties which the furious passions of their enemies delighted to heap upon them? Surely by none other power than that of the Holy Spirit of God! When, as children of peace, they were pursuing the even tenor of their life, as yet unassailed by the fury of the persecutor, no prospect of troublous times terrifying them, they little thought that such power and comfort could have been the martyr's portion. They never then were conscious of the same measure of the Spirit, which in their tortures they experienced. "As their days were, so was their strength"—the fuller aid was reserved for the heavier trial. Perhaps had the same

we be true to our God. It is a no less remarkable than monitory fact, that the tribe of Asher never possessed the whole district originally assigned to it. The people took not heed to make their calling and election sure. In their weakness of faith, their sins, negligences, and ignorances, they failed of the full but conditional blessing prepared for them. Their failure is recorded for our learning; to show us, that though to the covenanted members of Christ a glorious inheritance is spread out for their use; an assured promise, that, as their days, so shall be their strength—called to no trial, however severe, but that strength apportioned shall be theirs—yet these and all advantages may be forfeited, if either on the one hand they are so disregarded that men lean to their own understanding and trust to their own strength; or, on the other hand, if their faith exalt itself into presumption, and, under pretence of trusting in fulness of faith to the grace of God, they fold their hands in slumber, or stretch them out to work sin—leaving to *Him alone* the *work* of that salvation, which is not the less his *free gift*, because He wills that part of the labour in attaining it should be borne by those to whom the gift is freely offered.

measure of the Divine Spirit been vouchsafed to them in the balmy season of repose, they had relaxed their own endeavours, had so forfeited the co-operation of the Most High, and at last had sunk to rise no more. Whereas, the fatherly loving-kindness of their God, by supplying sufficient grace for the occasion, not only conferred the positive blessing of an inestimable gift; but by calling forth the energies of the individual, necessitated a salutary watchfulness, and thereby kept the soul in safety. In the history of our blessed Redeemer, this principle is developed in all its fulness. As He was pleased to be not only our sacrifice for sin, but also our ensample of godly life[1], we have but to trace *his* steps, and the sceptic himself must allow, that to every one born of the Spirit, "as our days are, so shall our spiritual strength be"—not like the strength of the body, decaying with length of days, but gathering more and more power as our deeper and heavier trials advance and accumulate. Throughout his varied sufferings the blessed Son of God, though holy and without sin, did deign to pray for and accept the aid of the Spirit in such proportion as his need required; from his first trial in the wilderness, till his last awful trial, when He poured out his soul unto death, prayer was alike his refuge and his aid.

You must, therefore, always strive to shun what is wrong in thought, word, and deed; and to aim at what is holy, and just, and good: striving *strenuously*, as if the event depended on your own exertions. At the same time, your trust for success must be upon the assistance, which it may please God to give in answer to your prayers for grace to "help in *every* time of need." Upon this point Chrysostom, one of the most eloquent fathers of the Church, is equally powerful and plain[2]. Impressed deeply with the feeling of a holy

[1] John xiii. 15. Rom. xv. 5. 1 Pet. ii. 21.
[2] Chrysostom died A.D. 407.

and reverential awe for Almighty God; deterred by that feeling from the daring attempt of lowering one of the divine attributes to exalt another; believing rather, that divine justice and divine love are held in exact balance—mercy and truth meeting together in the Gospel—he combats with like ability and zeal the dangerous heresies, of irrespective and irresistible grace on the one hand, and of man's independence of it on the other. God's free grace and man's free will are both asserted. That they are to be reconciled, is evident by the fact. The *mode* by which each has its share in our salvation, he humbly leaves to the inscrutable counsels of the Most High—for who can fathom the mysterious union of man's free agency, and God's free gift of vital power to act, even in the body? The passage to which I refer is closed with a simplicity, which, coming from the learned and elegant Chrysostom, is more than usually striking. "For neither does God," says he, "lay any forcible restraint upon the freedom of our understanding; nor weaken our free will: rather He co-operates, and He affords assistance, and stretches forth his hand to save; *or, were the whole work of Him—what is to hinder, but that all men must be saved?*"

The reasoning is unanswerable. God being omnipotent, and Himself willing not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should be converted and live; the salvation of mankind must be universal, if He alone were concerned in effecting it. *Then all* men *must* be saved. For, if we argue that the whole work of salvation is of God, and at the same time allow that such salvation may be incomplete; we fall into the pestilent error, of limiting at once the power and the mercy of God—we set bounds to his attributes; we limit his grace. But man being a party to the work, and the grace whereby he can hope to effect his part of the work successfully being a *covenanted* grace—no sooner does he fail to fulfil his part of the covenant, than he fails of the aid by which alone his best endea-

vours to fulfil it can be rendered available; and so, *his own* failure mars the whole. Hence to the unrighteous and impenitent, the affecting and pathetic appeal—"O house of Israel, why *will* ye die?"

"Therefore," adds Chrysostom, "it is manifest, that in the work of our salvation, arduous as it is, if instead of being wanting to ourselves by sloth and listlessness, we the rather apply to the work with alacrity, with diligence, with good-will, with a fixed resolve and anxious watchfulness; and, withdrawing ourselves from the entanglement of this lower world, and its concerns, look forward to the next world, and daily set our affections there—God will be with us as our helper and defender[1]."

Whilst thus you labour to work out your own salvation, God will work with you and for you of his good pleasure: giving that measure of co-operation which the particular occasion may render necessary. What then, though you may not feel always the same fervour of spirit; the same glowing sense of an all-present God; the same fulness of grace to bear up against infirmity? What though sometimes the sun of joy seem withdrawn, clouds and darkness interposing? Divine grace in all its brightness is ready again to shine on your heart, when the Searcher of all hearts shall see the need thereof. And if, in proportion to your advance in the Christian life, your soul seems tried by severer temptations—like the patient patriarch, Job, more and more afflicted in mind, body, or estate—be not surprised that, as your spiritual strength has increased, God lays upon you a heavier cross. You are stronger to bear it. Experience of the past well justifies faith in the future[2]. Why despair of success,

[1] Chrys. Hom. Matt. ix. 37.

[2] Among other illustrations of this truth, with which the lives of the faithful abound, one of the most striking is that supplied by the conduct of the youthful David, when about to engage with Goliath. Saul was so amazed at the boldness of the stripling warrior, that he held him rather chargeable with temerity, than actuated by courage. "Saul said to David, Thou art not able to go against this Philistine,

when privileged to rest upon the joyful assurance, that "as thy days, so shall thy strength be?"

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## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE SABBATH.

But what if man be thus aided in his duty, by the word of God written for his learning, and the Spirit of God revealed for his sanctification? This lower world in which he is ordained for a season to move

to fight with him; for thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth." 1 Sam. xvii. 33. David, however, nothing daunted in the prospect of meeting the great champion of the armies of the Philistines, removes the fears of the king, and confirms his own courage, by recalling past deliverances at the hand of that God, in whose name he is about to contend. He declares his faith, that in the approaching strife of death, as in the former struggles for his life, a *successful* issue must be *of God* only; but he argues, that as faith was then aided by Divine help to the extent needed, so will it be in the more arduous conflict awaiting him—"Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God. David said moreover, The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. And Saul said unto David, Go, and the Lord be with thee." 1 Sam. xvii. 36, 37. Thus, however bold his daring, and energetic his own exertions when engaged in conflict with the dreadful beasts of the forest, he was victor in the deadly strife—not because strong was his hand and undaunted his courage, but—because the *Spirit of God* nerved his arm, and made his courage that it quailed not. Special aid had been vouchsafed to him for the special trial. Relying, therefore, upon the same aid on the part of his God, but still exercising the same resolute exertions on his own part, he doubted not but that sufficient aid would be given to meet the coming emergency. Faith assured him, that *as* his *day, so* would be his *strength*. In that faith he went forth; in that faith he fought; in that faith he conquered.

Christian!—thou hast thine enemies arrayed against thee—mightier indeed than the Philistine of Gath!—"principalities and powers, and the rulers of the darkness of this world;" and thine own passions, more fierce even than the boastings of the Philistine. But thou hast also thy God with thee! Follow David then to the battle; strong in the aid of God; fearlessly, cheerfully. Let David's *faith* be yours—and his shall be your *victory!*

has so natural a tendency to withdraw his mind from the one, and estrange his heart from the other—the very duties of earth entangling his affections and impeding his heavenly-mindedness—that human resolve and human wisdom had alike failed to supply adequate means for keeping up a devotional frame of mind befitting creatures dependent upon their Creator, sustained by his power, and amenable to his judgment. Mankind would soon forget the solemn relation in which they stand before their God, were they left to choose for themselves the times and seasons for giving expression to their feeling of it. On special occasions indeed, they might be led to an earnest and pious outpouring of their hearts before the footstool of God's throne: they might then flee to Heaven for succour, and so acknowledge its power, in cases of imminent danger, and bow with grateful adoration, when unlooked-for blessing was vouchsafed. But suppose that special providences, either afflictive or otherwise, might have force to strike from the heart some sparks of holy zeal; a fallen nature must never trust to the caprice of feeling, where the point at issue is uniform duty to God.

Hence the gracious appointment of a Sabbath. And whether we consider its divine authority; its merciful adaptation to the beings for whom it was made; its beneficial effects upon mankind, collectively and individually; its observance in token of allegiance to the Supreme; or the fitness of its services here on earth as a preparative for the more glorious services of heaven—the appointment itself, in whatever light it be viewed, has stood from the beginning, and will to the end stand, a beacon-light to remind the world of the solemn service it owes to God for its creation, preservation, redemption, and sanctification; and a token of his love to the fallen race of man.

As with other of God's mercies, however, so it is with this: possession generates indifference; and the Sabbath-breaker too often becomes disregardful of the

mercy which ordained it. You yourself, indeed, may happily not have been among those, who profane, or despise, or habitually neglect the Sabbath; still you may feel in your sickness, that during health you have not always observed it with that solemnity, and delight, and holy zeal, which you now see that it so justly did demand; and by which, could you at once be endued with your wonted strength and activity, you would with equal gratitude and readiness hallow each return of it. What to you now are the excuses, which formerly served to palliate your disregard of this holy day, but of which *now* you are ashamed? Distance from the house of God sometimes served as an excuse for non-attendance; or the cares of a family; or the inconvenience of not finishing some worldly business, which must otherwise be put off. *Now*, the case is altered: your heart secretly upbraids you with the past. You are now truly sorry to have neglected, when health and strength were yours, opportunities, of which in sickness you are unable to avail yourself. Be not too proud to listen to the upbraidings of conscience. They are painful, but surely they are salutary. "Faithful" always "are the wounds of a friend:" and conscience heals as it wounds; for it leads to sorrow; and sorrow leads to repentance; and repentance to amendment; and amendment to faith in God's mercy; and faith in the mercy of God, to hope in his love. I trust then that your bitter experience of the past will make you wise for the future. Yet, lest if health return and restore you to the world, you should again fall into similar neglect of duty, it may be useful to refresh your memory by reviewing the various motives which bind men to keep the Sabbath *holy:* and fix on your mind so firmly the *obligation* of this duty, that you may never again fail in the fulfilment of it.

The first and highest motives by which man is bound to keep holy the Sabbath day, is its *divine authority.* The authority for its observance is not of man, but of God. "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it *holy.*"

—is the command of the Almighty. Nor does this command stand alone. It rests not, as it might have rested, simply on its authority; conveying the will of Him, whose will, upon every principle of common sense, must be allowed supreme over the beings He created: it softens the sternness of its authority by the gentleness of its reasoning—"*for*, in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and *rested* the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it." Thus, there is graciously associated with the necessity of obedience to the Divine command, so happy a recollection of the Divine love, that it cannot fail to affect grateful hearts with the liveliest thankfulness, and so render our duty our happiness. It therefore must strike the thoughtful mind with painful wonder, when men are found, who can not only neglect and think light of the Sabbath, but who can forbear to hail it "as a delight; the holy of the Lord, honourable [1]." Still, the authority is not lowered, because gratitude is called in to aid obedience to it. The extent of the obligation has been, is, and will be for ever universal among the people of God; among all towards whom He is pleased to extend the knowledge of his will [2]. It was so from the beginning: for though we do not find the command positively recorded till the time of Moses [3], yet as it is specially stated to have had its institution in consequence of the Creator's rest from the work of creation, we should leave an insuperable difficulty in any attempt to reconcile the ways of God to man, were we not to conclude, that its observance was enforced from the beginning. Surely the patriarchs—

[1] Isa. lviii. 13.

[2] Exod. xxxi. 17. "It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed."

[3] The law was given from Mount Sinai 2513 years from the creation of this present world, and 1491 years before the Advent of the Messiah.

who walked with Jehovah as friends; they with whom He communicated by angelic messengers, or held converse in a more immediate manner—*they* could never have been unmindful of that glorious work of the great Creator, from which He rested; or of that gracious rest which He appointed for his creatures. As well might we suppose the other laws in the decalogue unobserved, or not obligatory before the Mosaic dispensation, because, till that period, there is no mention of their specific promulgation. But in fact, though we find no direct and positive command on this subject in the earlier records of sacred writ, yet from the very beginning, was it *virtually* enjoined as an ordinance *for ever*, when "God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it, because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made." He *blessed* it—as a day wherein his creatures should rest from toil, and celebrate with *thanksgiving* the glory of their Creator. He *sanctified* it—that the character of their rest and joy might be determined, as a *holy* joy [1]. The

[1] Gen. ii. 1—3. "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it; because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made."

It would appear from this passage, that God, at the close of the sixth day of the creation, revealed to our first parents the separation of the seventh day as a sanctified day, in order that they might begin their existence with praise to Him who had called them into being. The words cannot be understood merely as the statement of a fact, but as a declaration of his will to his attendant creatures. And though the labours of Paradise were of a nature free from anxiety and pain, yet even "to till the garden of Eden and to dress it," would have been attended with labour for the body, and so far would have fixed the thoughts on *this* world: whereas, it was necessary that the soul, destined as it was eventually for the angelic services of heaven, should be duly prepared for those services, and consequently be withdrawn at stated intervals from all other thoughts than those which would fix it on its heavenly destination.

It would be difficult therefore to suppose, that this knowledge of a Sabbath and its ordinances was not revealed to our first parents. And if it were a duty in their state of innocence, thus to celebrate on each

command therefore given on Mount *Sinai* was in fact but a confirmation of what had never ceased among the people of God—a renewal of what had only lain dormant; once probably, when before the flood, "the earth was corrupt before God, and was filled with vio-

returning Sabbath, the glorious creation, "when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy*," how would the duty be hailed as a privilege, when in their fallen state, doomed to labour as a curse, there was left unto them one day out of seven, when, by divine permission, they might cease that labour and toil; might lay down for a season their worldly cares and worldly sorrows: approach again their once offended God, gain reconciliation, and be at peace with Him!

That this Sabbath was observed by the Patriarchs is more than probable. The vast term to which human life extended in the earlier ages was favourable to the transmission of the Divine will on this subject. Adam lived 930 years; of which period Enoch was his companion for 308 years. Enoch is specially mentioned as one who "walked with God." To imagine therefore that he would omit this, nearly the first commandment given by the Creator to his creatures, is scarcely possible. Methuselah, his son, lived with him and Adam 243 years. Noah lived with Methuselah 600 years. Thus then, to the flood, we have three generations by whom the knowledge of the Sabbath must have been preserved—Adam, Methuselah, and Noah. The *seventh* day was specially marked by *Noah*. When he sent out of the ark a dove to ascertain the subsidence of the waters; he on two several occasions waited for its return *seven* days: habitually looking for some special token of rest and blessing on the *seventh* day. Having moreover been eminent as a preacher of righteousness, whom nor scorn nor danger could deter from declaring the whole law of God, he would doubtless impress upon his posterity, who were to people the world anew—the still accumulating obligation to keep the Sabbath holy †: and so the knowledge of that holy day would be carried down to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. During the patriarchal wanderings in Canaan indeed, and especially during Israel's bondage in Egypt, where their hard taskmasters allowed no pause in labour, Sabbath-observances were probably interrupted. But that the observance of the Sabbath, at the giving of the law from Mount Sinai, was to be considered with reference to its observance in former ages of the world, appears clear, as well from the terms in which it is couched, "*Remember* the Sabbath day, to keep it holy;" as from its declared reference to the first creation of the world, "*for* in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it." But the creation of the world is an event in which all ages, past, present, and future, are equally concerned.

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* Job xxxviii. 7. † Noah lived 350 years after the Flood.

lence[1]"—"the foundations of the earth out of course" —and once again, when during Israel's bondage in Egypt, any regular observance of it was of necessity interrupted. To impress this view of it still more strongly upon the Israelites; to hold up the blessedness of observing the Sabbath in their freedom, in more striking contrast to the neglect of it in their state of bondage; and to convince them that the *word* of Jehovah came with all the majesty of his power, and the fulness of his mercy; no sooner was it ordained that they should be fed for forty years by a miraculous supply of heavenly food, called "manna," than this day was marked by a twofold wonder. During five days, food sufficient for the day was to be daily gathered. If any man gathered more, the remainder became unfit for food. But on the *sixth* day each man found and gathered sufficient food for *two* days; and the whole then collected continued fresh and fit for use; in order that on the Sabbath day there might be a complete rest throughout Israel, and all the people might be free to receive the blessing and sanctification, with which the day itself was stamped; and which was, and is, and for ever will be reflected upon those who, in sincerity and truth, "keep it holy."

How sternly that authority was enforced after the clear and fixed promulgation of the law on Mount Sinai, the history of God's ancient people is in full evidence. Death followed an infringement of it: "Whosoever doeth any work on the Sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death." Again, "Every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death[2]." And in order to prove that this awful threatening of punishment was no mere assertion of power, but would be executed upon the disobedient, the record of one offender is preserved, who, having laboured on the Sabbath day, was, by express command of the Lord, put to death: "And the Lord said unto Moses, The

[1] Gen. vi. 11. [2] Exod. xxxi. 14, 15.

man shall be surely put to death: all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp. And all the congregation brought him without the camp, and stoned him with stones, and he died; as the Lord commanded Moses [1]." Hence Nehemiah's patriotic remonstrance with the nobles of Judah, whose disregard of the Sabbath to keep it holy, sapped the prosperity of their people; "caused God to bring evil upon them and their city [2];" and "brought wrath upon Israel by profaning the Sabbath day," which was for ever to be a sign between God and the nations to whom his truth should be made known. If the day were hallowed before God, and exalted among men, it was to bring triumph; if lowered, or neglected, there would be defeat for victory, and sadness for joy, and Divine wrath for the love and favour of the Most High! "But if ye will *not* hearken unto me to hallow the Sabbath day, and not to bear a burden, even entering in at the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day; then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched [3]."

Such was the authority, with which the command to keep the Sabbath holy was enforced upon the elect people of God, under the *Mosaic* dispensation [4]; and such the penalties by which it was guarded. That the *Christian* Sabbath comes with milder enactments, argues not that it comes with weakened authority. The dispensation of the Gospel is throughout mild, and gentle, and persuasive. The law was given in terrors of lightnings and thunderings, and a visible glory, of which no mortal eye could endure the blaze.

[1] Numb. xv. 35, 36. [2] Nehem. xiii. 18. [3] Jer. xvii. 27.

[4] That the severer enactments against Sabbath-breaking were removed under the Christian dispensation, is in accordance with its general character of mercy and love. Yet *authority* is never lessened because exercised with forbearance and loving-kindness. The power of Jehovah to punish or reward is the same, whether he demand our obedience upon the ground of fear of his terrors, or win us over to our duty upon the principle of love for his mercy.

The Gospel was ushered in with angel songs, and established by the gentle voice of the meek and lowly Jesus. The difference, therefore, between the Mosaic and the Christian Sabbath is but consistent with the different character of the two dispensations, and in harmony with all the ways of God with man.

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## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THE SABBATH.

THE authority of the Mosaic Sabbath was expected to influence, not the outward man only, but the inmost heart. There was not only to be a rest from bodily labour, but that rest was to be occupied in cherishing holier thoughts, and higher feelings, and purer affections, than the turmoil of the world permits to the anxious mind of man. A heavenly spirit was, for that day more especially, to be fostered in the soul; gradually moulding it, and fitting it for the enjoyment of an eternal Sabbath in heaven. The moral discipline by which that spirituality was to be attained, Jehovah himself declared with a fulness equally plain and instructive; accompanied by promise of extended blessing, which alone might suffice to win a ready obedience. "If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing *thy* pleasure on my holy day: and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour him, *not* doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord: and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it[1]."

[1] Is. lviii. 13, 14. "Turn away thy *foot* from the Sabbath: from doing thy pleasure on my holy day."
If this word be taken *literally*, the meaning will be, that when on

It is impossible for language to express, in a more beautiful and comprehensive manner, the fitting mode of regulating our own habits of life on the Sabbath, than this passage. The noble spirit of heavenly-mindedness which the command inspires into the soul, elevates it far above the grovelling notion that a Sabbath is a mere day of rest from bodily toil—a mere cessation from the daily round of worldly gain, or worldly duties. It demands that we withdraw our affections from earth, and fix them on heaven; it points out the necessity of a *marked distinction* in our employments on that day; taking care that they jar not upon the holy tone of feeling which should then fill the heart: for though there is nothing meritorious even in the most devoted service, yet we are encouraged to hope that *sincere* service may be acceptable; whilst in *token* of our wish to show deference and honour to the day hallowed by our God, we *cease* from "doing *our own* pleasures." Further, this command expects that we

God's holy day we turn away from so unhallowed a Sabbath as doing our own pleasure on his holy day, *then* God will bless us.

If it be understood *figuratively*, the *purport* will be still the same. The *affections* being to the *mind* what the *feet* are to the *body*—agents to bear them severally on their way whither any object may induce them—so on the Sabbath days, we are to *turn away from* all those worldly affections which would lead us from God, in order that our hearts may be perfectly free for *his* service; lest otherwise they lead us to do "our own pleasure" on God's holy day.

Whether, however, we consider the word literally or figuratively, the whole passage is equally instructive: drawing in strong contrast such a Sabbath as the irreligious would keep, and such a Sabbath as God would require. *Man* would do *his own* pleasure on *God's* holy day; passing it perhaps in rest from usual labour and toil, but still pursuing his usual amusements, occupied with his accustomed worldly pleasures, and laying schemes for the advancement of his interests or the extension of his enjoyments. From *such* a Sabbath he is to *turn away*. The Sabbath which *God* requires, is one, dedicated to Himself; not indeed in a severe spirit of mortification, or harsh severity, or wearisome dulness; but in the full and free expression of a delighted heart, bending its thoughts and directing its affections to contemplate the perfections of Jehovah; rejoicing in his mercy, delighting in his presence, happy in his love; glad therefore to consecrate that grateful joy by a holy observance of the day which the Lord hath called his own.

hail each returning Sabbath with joy, and greet it in the impassioned language of David—"This is the day which the Lord hath made, we will rejoice and be glad in it:" we will rejoice, that though labour be our appointed portion, and we be doomed "late to take rest, and eat the bread of carefulness," we are privileged to lay it aside on this day. Yet the rest appointed is not for sloth, or our own pleasure, or worldly trifling; its character is stamped broadly and plainly as *Holy*—"holy to the Lord; honourable"—to be honoured above all other days by the reverence shown to it, in abstaining from wonted employments and amusements, which, though in themselves perhaps harmless, yet not being necessary, we put aside, *in proof* that we "do *not our own ways*, nor find our own pleasure, nor speak our own words:" making the distinction not in any pharisaical boast of spiritual pride, but with that candour and judgment to which our reason, aided by the word and Spirit of God, may guide us.

Happily for this Christian nation, such is the view generally taken of the mode in which a Sabbath should be kept: among those at least who are not ashamed to hold themselves bound to obey *Him* in whom they profess to believe. That some consider such strict observance of the day, inconsistent with that cheerfulness with which the heart ought to be filled in the service of the Almighty, is not less true than strange—strange, because it is only to *such* a Sabbath that the Divine blessing is attached: and without the Divine blessing, what is cheerfulness but a name; a mockery—laughter in which the heart is sad?

Surely, a greater misery could not befal our nation, than a weakening of the sanctity which now professedly marks the observance of an English Sabbath. Lower the tone of devotional feeling, which gilds the Sabbath hours—make congregational worship a matter of indifference; break in upon holy meditation; disturb by common business or mixed amusement the calm and

quiet of the domestic circle; give up the holy contemplation of the works of God, as parents and children take their walk abroad, in the fields rich in his bounty; and lead their feet to scenes of vain public pleasures, where worldly affections must predominate: disturb that salutary pause in the career of life, which, enabling men to look back upon the past, and forward to the future, aids them in either keeping the strait and narrow way, or returning to it; entice them from the green pastures by the waters of comfort, where the good find their true rest, and though on earth, have their conversation in heaven—lower this high feeling; bring it down to earth again; and who shall dare expect other result, than a loosening of those principles of right, which at present keep together the bands of society; and a disregard of those hopes and fears of an hereafter, which to the individual, in all the relations of life, constitute his only safe guidance, his only sure strength: fitting him for that conscientious fulfilment of duty here, which may, by God's gracious mercy in the Saviour, lead him to a blessed recompense hereafter? That such result would attend an authorized relaxation of Sabbath observances is as certain as that effect follows its cause. Men would never be contented to dispense with *rest from labour* on that day—the ordinance, as a season of repose from bodily toil, is too consonant with man's view of his own comfort, too well adapted to his consciousness that stated rest is needful, to be voluntarily resigned. But if usual bodily labour be suspended, and the mind not applied sedulously to the spiritual work of prayer and praise, of meditation and holy communing, of self-examination, and due preparation for death and eternity, the inevitable consequence would be misery. Men, no longer finding exercise for their intellectual powers in holy converse with their Maker, or for their physical powers in the stirring business of active life, would soon become slaves to their passions, and learn to follow "*their own* ways, and do *their own* pleasure."

Whereas, allow to the world its appointed pause; keep up the tone of Sabbath feeling; elevate it higher and still higher, as the human mind gains more and more intelligence; and who can doubt but that the Divine blessing will rest upon us? The Almighty has declared that the Sabbath shall be a sign for ever between him and his people. Blessing and glory are promised to them, fully and unreservedly, so long as they shall observe the sign. *Then* are they to prosper. "Then," adds Jehovah to his people—"*Then* shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

How strictly the Jews felt the obligation of the Sabbath, is evident in their various remonstrances with our blessed Lord upon what they considered his desecration of it. Did his disciples, as they passed with Him through the corn fields on the Sabbath day, pluck the ears of corn; instantly "the Pharisees said unto Him, Behold! why do they on the Sabbath day that which is not lawful?" So, again, when a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise help herself, was loosed from her infirmity, and was made straight, and glorified God; "the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because that Jesus had healed on the Sabbath day, and said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the Sabbath day[1]."

The skill with which the Son of God meets their objections, and confutes their arguments, showing by their own proceedings at once their folly and their sin, is indeed sufficiently clear whenever the subject calls Him forth into argument with them. He reminds them that occasions are by their own law provided for, when

[1] Luke xiii. 14.

work may be done—especially works of mercy: "doth not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall and lead him away to watering?" the conclusion to be drawn being inevitable. If this act of consideration to the necessities of brute beasts which perish be a permitted work; much more must acts of beneficence and benevolence towards man, for the relief of his necessities in mind, body, or estate, be also permitted. The holy work well befits the holy day[1].

Why, then, it may be asked, did not this, the appointed *sign* of God's favour to his people, and their

[1] All wonder at the severity of the enactments relating to the Israelitish Sabbath-breaker is removed, when we consider the peculiar circumstances of the people of God when the law was promulgated. They were surrounded on every side by nations given up to the wildest superstitions, and the most degrading idolatry; themselves, as their history shows, fatally prone to such abominations. To check this proneness, where it was likely specially to break forth, partly from a natural stiffneckedness which led to a love of resistance; partly from that inaction, which, unavoidably attendant upon their miraculous support in the wilderness, consequently left them more exposed to temptation; there was a peculiar necessity for adopting strong measures for their preservation—measures which, having for their object the prevention of a weighty evil, were framed with proportionate strength to the evil apprehended. Hence the severe and even stern attention required to the minutest regulations of the Sabbath, where, if they were neglected, the danger would instantly accrue, of the individual being led astray to other than the true worship, and so forfeiting the blessing of his covenant. The fear of death, therefore, was placed before the Israelite, who should be guilty of the sin of Sabbath-breaking; and mercy it was which enacted the law: for no measures, less strong, would have availed to control men circumstanced as the Israelites then were. As they became not only one among the nations, but "a wise and understanding people," some of the reasons for so severe a penalty on the Sabbath-breaker might lose in part their force. But we are not surprised that the Jews still held the law itself as retaining all its severity. The laws of their religion, in the very letter of them, were their boast and their glory. They were indications to the world of their cherished election to the favour of Jehovah, as a peculiar people: the honour and importance that fact conferred, more than countervailing the burden with which it was accompanied.

Jesus would fain have taught them to keep the Sabbath in *spirit* and in truth, as well as in the form and letter. But their pride intervened—that pride of heart, and of will, which too surely combined with their other sins to bring them to destruction.

distinguishing mark as the chosen, stand between them and woe in the dreadful day of their visitation? Why did the promised blessing of defence not rest upon such a nation? Why did the Sabbath no longer throw its defence around them, as in old time; at once their shield and their glory?—The answer meets us in the very words of our Divine Master: "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their *heart* is *far from me*[1]." It was with their Sabbaths, as with their other ordinances; they polluted them[2]. Disregard of the spirit of the law strove to go hand in hand with observance of the mere letter of the law. There was a constant and vain effort to bring about that impossible union—the service of God and the service of Mammon. All their aim was to keep the Sabbath to the letter, careless how they broke it in the spirit; thereby leaving themselves open to every temptation; becoming ready victims of evil; willing slaves of sin; and having begun with unholy Sabbaths, ending with a revolting and rebellious heart, which drew them from their God. Hence the appeal of the Almighty, followed by a destruction, which swept like a whirlwind over the land —"Shall I not visit for these things? saith the Lord. Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this[3]?"

Why has the record of these things been preserved, but for our learning? Or, are not the sufferings of the once favoured people of God in old time sufficiently striking to arouse his people now to a hearty and spiritual obedience to the same law?—a law, sustained by higher sanctions; to be attended with fuller blessings if obeyed in sincerity and truth, or followed by severer punishment if it be either rejected on the one hand, or on the other received for mere form's sake. Oh, that we may take warning as a nation, and *so* hallow the Sabbaths of our God, "neither doing our own ways on *his* holy day," "nor finding our own pleasure,

[1] Matt. xv. 8. [2] Ezek. xx. 12, 13. [3] Jer. v. 29.

nor speaking our own words"—that his full blessing may rest upon us; and that as we "call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable," He may "cause us to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed us with the heritage of Jacob; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it!"

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## CHAPTER XIX.

### THE SABBATH.

It was not, however, only by illustration and argument, that our blessed Saviour defended Himself against the charge of desecrating the Sabbath. He took higher ground. He appealed to his *power* in justification of his acts. Declaring the Son of man to be Lord also of the Sabbath, He claimed to do what He would with his own [1]. The reasoning by which He arrived at this conclusion, was conducted not so much by the force of argument, as by a reference to facts: facts which, proving Him to be the Lord of that material world, to commemorate the creation of which was the primary object of the Sabbath ordinance, made it evident to common sense as well as satisfactory to faith, that the Sabbath itself, with its ordinances, its employments, its very existence, must be at his disposal and his ordering. He who originated the ordinance, would of course regulate the mode of its observance.

[1] As Maker of all things, his claim was just *. And it is important that the principle on which it rests be a recognized principle: for where it is wisely acted upon, submission to the Divine will, under the heaviest trials, is rendered comparatively easy. "We are thine, O God; not our own! Let us then not murmur. Thou canst do what thou wilt with thine own." This was St. Paul's reasoning, "Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?" Rom. ix. 20.

* John i. 3.

And of what part of creation did He not show Himself the Lord? All nature, animate and inanimate, obeyed Him. The elements acknowledged his sovereignty. The earth supplied food; the sea gave up her treasures; the winds and the waves stayed their fury; whilst man in his strength and in his weakness, in his hatred and in his affection, was moulded to his will, and could not forbear confessing Him Lord of all. Thus, when He acknowledged Himself to the officers of justice to be, the "Jesus of Nazareth, whom they sought," they who came armed to seize Him, "went backward, and fell to the ground." Such was the power of his presence [1]. On the fallen Peter, who was warm in his affection, as weak in his resolve, he but *looked;* the creature owned the presence of the Creator; the heart owned the eye of the Searcher of all hearts. Did thousands faint for lack of food? Those thousands He fed; and though his word was the only agent to gather the food required, the feast supplied enough and to spare. Was it required that He showed obedience to the laws of his country by paying tribute? The sea gave the tribute, according to his word; even as his Divine knowledge foresaw, and his Divine power ordered [2]. Were his disciples afraid when storm and tempest threatened to overwhelm the ship in which they were sailing in his company? The winds and the waves were hushed at his bidding: *they* likewise confessed Him their Lord, and there was a great calm. So, the various infirmities to which the human frame is liable yielded to Him who made it. Sickness became health; weakness strength; the blind received their sight; the deaf heard; the dumb spake; the alienated mind returned to the due exercise of its powers; reason resumed her seat where long she had been a stranger; and the dead were restored to life, because *He* willed, who made all things, and for whose pleasure they are and were created. Thus, even from

[1] John xviii. 6.

[2] Matt. xvii. 27.

the blade of grass which we tread upon, to man, into whom He breathed the breath of life, and whom He made a living soul—all things owned Him their Lord. Well, therefore, might He appeal to his *power* to justify his act, when He did *that* on the Sabbath day, which his enemies deemed unlawful.

But was it thus his intention either to abrogate the Sabbath, or loosen the force of its enactments?—Far from it. He confirmed its authority by his precepts, and sanctified it by his example. All his arguments upon the subject, in *opposition* to the Jews, amount to this: that "it *is* lawful to *do good* on the Sabbath day." The Sabbath which He disregards, is a stringent adherence to the *letter* of the law: when such adherence to the letter is considered as a substitute for observing the *spirit* of the law: when abstinence from worldly labour is held sufficient, without abstinence from worldly thoughts and worldly desires; when a spirit of pleasure or of gain waits but the setting of the Sabbath sun again to come forth into action, and slight the holy duties to which a Sabbath morn has called us. In a word, the Rest, which our Divine Teacher enjoins, is a rest from those earthly cares, which though in their season necessary for the sustentation of bodily life, must have their appointed pause, lest otherwise they destroy our spiritual life; and that rest is to be a holy rest. The outward ordinance was observed by our Saviour with an uniformity so habitual, that no pointed mention is made of it, but we gather from the gospel history, that to attend the synagogue on the Sabbath was his regular practice: the historian, therefore, not considering it as a point to be noted. The charge against Him was, not that He *neglected* the Sabbath, but that as He went or returned from public worship, He added to the strict letter of the law the further duty of acting up to the spirit of it—benefiting the creatures of God, and so exalting the glory of God. It was thus that He effected the object of his coming into the world, as a Divine

Teacher. He came "not to destroy the law, but to fulfil." That which was wanting, He supplied; that which was erroneous, He corrected. Therefore He insisted upon spiritual-mindedness in the observance of that Sabbath, which being devoted to the worship of God, would not otherwise be kept holy, than by being kept in a holy spirit, ready to do always his holy will. He added the reason—"God is a spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth."

Thus our gracious Master wills, that whilst thankful for the Divine mercy which has removed the severer enactments of the Jewish Sabbath, and the severer temporal penalties attached to an infringement of its ordinances, we are not on that account to omit a strictly holy observance of that day outwardly—are not to forego the form of godliness; but to *add* to the form, the *power* of godliness: for the form without the power is but the shadow instead of its substance—a body without a soul. Whereas He, by his word and Spirit, aiding his followers in this, as in all other their works, would have us to keep the Sabbath day HOLY, both in word and deed; in the letter and in the spirit. He would have us keep it as unto the Lord, not as unto man only. He would have us devote it to the service of the Almighty, "not doing our own ways, nor finding our own pleasures, nor speaking our own words;" but esteeming it a day "holy unto the *Lord*, and honourable," wisely employing it in so disciplining our souls to high and heavenly hopes, and to aspirations after another and a better world, that we may gradually be prepared for our appointed services in Heaven, where "our sun shall no more go down," when "time itself shall be no longer," and where an everlasting Sabbath shall be at once our reward and our glory for ever.

## CHAPTER XX.

### THE SABBATH.

And now, my reader, since the leisure and calm of sickness have induced you thus far to a serious consideration of the ways of God with man, your heart has expanded, I hope, towards religion with a warmth seldom felt before, and has enjoyed a peace with which the stranger to religion "intermeddleth not." On the subject to which I called your attention in the former chapters—the *Sabbath* of the *Lord*—you probably felt an increased interest, both from a consciousness that you had, in health and strength, too often neglected the solemn duties of that day; and from a sad conviction, that you had consequently too often lost the blessed consolations of it.

Whether, however, you reflect upon your past neglect of the Sabbath, as a duty omitted, or a privilege disregarded, there can be no doubt that mingled feelings of wonder and grief fill your mind.

But if it be wonderful that men neglect it; and under pretences which it is impossible to reconcile even to their own consciences, much less to their Maker; it is more strange, that so neglecting it, they should, under a strong self-deception, disavow, (and many pretend to disavow,) the intention of dishonouring Him by their neglect, or hazarding the welfare of the soul by their disobedience. They still claim to themselves, as professing Christians, all the privileges of their covenant. They hope to gain his mercy, whom they profess to believe as God. Called by the name of Christ, they look to be saved through Him by whose name they are called; and hope that they shall go to heaven at last. Now there is a dangerous delusion here. What can be more delusive, than for servants to look for favour from a master whose commands they systematically disobey? or for a son to

claim blessing from a father whose will he opposes? As to the hope of heaven to which the Sabbath-breaker looks—what must *that* heaven be, which *he* anticipates? All which the Scriptures reveal to us of the nature of heavenly happiness seems comprehended in this—that it will consist chiefly in an unceasing and unwearied service of God; resting not day and night for ever[1]. Strange! that they, who have no pleasure in serving God in the congregation, according to his will, here on earth, can expect to have pleasure in serving Him in heaven hereafter!—Nothing can be more inconsistent than such an expectation. Suppose for a moment that a Sabbath-breaker were admitted to join the heavenly worshippers, he would be as averse to raising the song of praise above, as he is from attending the courts of the Lord's house here below. The angels' heaven would be no heaven to him.

Nor is this fact less grievous than it is wonderful. I believe, indeed, that much of Sabbath-breaking arises from habit. *Habitual* sin, however, is the more dreadful sin. A fearful thing it is to live week after week, month after month, year after year, in habitual disobedience to the positive command of the most high and holy God, who made us, and alone preserves us, and in whose hand is every moment of our lives; and who, when life is taken, hath power to cast soul and body into hell. Or is it possible for any Sabbath-breaker to consider himself safe from the just anger of the great and gracious Being, who, as the Father—the Redeemer—the Sanctifier—Himself has hallowed the day? Can they, who claim to be the creatures of his power, the redeemed of his love, and the sanctified of his grace, hallow *not* the day of their Lord; and yet hold themselves guiltless?

In addition to these considerations, it is not to be

[1] Rev. iv. 8. The Cherubim and Seraphim about the throne "*rest not day and night*, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come." Whilst the spirits of the just—martyrs and saints—praise Him unceasingly. They are before the throne of God, "and serve Him *day and night* in his temple." Rev. vii. 15.

forgotten, that he who wilfully breaks the Sabbath, deprives himself of the special blessings which await those who keep the day holy. *God* not only hallowed his own day, but *blessed* it. You yourself, as you lie on your sick bed, and naturally retrace your past course of life, not only remember with pain those occasions upon which you neglected this duty, but love to dwell upon the recollection of peaceful hours which you enjoyed when you were fulfilling it. You recollect that when engaged in the holy service of prayer, and penitence, and praise, your whole heart and soul were strong and peaceful. The world was for a time forgotten—its pleasures and its pains; its joys and its sorrows. You were altogether at peace with God and your fellow-creatures. One with Christ as Christ with God, you were by the Spirit so brought near to your gracious Redeemer, that no doubt remained of your prayers having ascended to the throne of grace, borne thither by your gracious Intercessor sitting at the right hand of the Father. Engaged in such heavenly communing, you felt in all its power the truth of the Saviour's assurance, that there is no condemnation to them that believe in Him—that such *are* "passed from death unto life [1]." And where *then* were the lower feelings of the soul, which in the world so often perplex man? Where were anger, and disappointment, and revenge, and envy?—They were as though they existed not. The heart, filled with the peace of God, had no room for any disturbing influence. Happy they who can bear testimony to this truth! The love of God, as we have drawn nigh to Him, has caused our love to man so to be enlarged, that we felt it not enough to forgive our enemies—we loved them: not enough to be reconciled to worldly disappointments—we rejoiced in them as means of training us for heaven [2]. As for revenge—every thought of a

[1] John v. 24.

[2] 2 Cor. iv. 17. "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

feeling so racking was gone. We were in the presence of the Almighty, who claims vengeance as his own[1]. Pity for the offender therefore took place of indignation for the offence; whilst even envy itself withered, when no discontent was left to foster it. The lowliest Christian—when admitted, as the poorest and lowliest are free to be admitted, into the presence of the Almighty by the service of prayer—learns at once to be contented with whatever his heavenly Father shall ordain for him[2]: and there is no envy of another where we are contented ourselves. It is by such recollections as these that you bear testimony to the blessed effects of keeping the Sabbath holy in the congregation of the faithful. It is thus you testify, that a sincere worshipper lays up in store for himself spiritual peace, which calms the troubled soul amid the agitating concerns of the world, and the voice of human passions; and attains a spiritual joy, which sets him high above all inferior views; raises him, whence he can so look down upon earthly concerns, that he views them in their proper dimensions, as nothing when compared to eternal things; and fixes his heart where true joys are to be found, even upon a reconciled God, a loving Saviour, and an ever-present Comforter. It is thus you testify to the blessings of a Sabbath. And whoever, on each returning Sabbath, attends the house of God regularly; with proper dispositions of humility and thankfulness; with an earnest desire to become a better Christian,—more sincere in his motives before God, more upright in his dealings before men; less conformed to this world, and more and more transformed by the renewing of his mind; *he* finds, that duty and blessing go hand in hand—the fulfilment of the duty which God requires, receiving the fulfilment of the blessing which He promises. He

[1] Rom. xii. 19. "It is written, *Vengeance* is *mine!—I* will repay, saith the *Lord*." See also Deut. xxxii. 35. Psalm xciv. 1. Heb. x. 30.

[2] 1 Tim. vi. 6. "*But*—Godliness with *contentment* is great gain."

gains blessing for himself and his children, whom he teaches to make the Almighty their friend; and as years roll on and bring him nearer to his end, he is more and more prepared to meet his God. This man, if he be poor as Lazarus in earthly goods, is rich as Abraham in the Divine blessing: and to him the house of God is as "a shadow from the heat, and a refuge from the storm;"—for there he finds his Saviour and his God.

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## CHAPTER XXI.

### THE SABBATH.

If this page be opened by a faithful servant of Christ, who loves the Lord's day, and finds his best pleasure thereon, in doing the will of Him who claims the day as his own [1], he may pass the chapter unread. The remonstrance it sets forth, the appeal it makes to man's self-love, and the counsel it offers apply not to him. He needs them not. But it may chance that this page be opened by one, who, either from a wilful determination to continue in sin, or from an eagerness after worldly business which allows no respite, or from a love of pleasure which makes all duties distasteful, has been too often a Sabbath-breaker. If so, allow the word of exhortation. Indeed, addressing you as I now do, under the supposition that you are debarred by sickness from pursuing your usual avocations, I am aware that your mind is more ready to receive the truth, in proportion as you are freed from the objects which long have intercepted your view of it. Consider then, for a moment, *whom* you disobey, in breaking the Sabbath! Not man; but God. Not a fellow-creature, whom you might in pride and pas-

[1] See Note, page 96.

sion choose to contemn—but the Almighty! the Being who made you—the Power, by whom alone your life is continued to you day by day, and hour by hour. You disobey *Him*, who in one moment could withdraw your life from you, and with it, all the opportunities which you now have of taking heed for the salvation of your soul. Suppose He were to strike you with sudden death when you were breaking the Sabbath: at an hour when you *ought* to be with your fellow-creatures and fellow-Christians in the courts of the Lord's house, drawing nigh to Him on earth, with whom you hope to live for ever in heaven! Suppose Him to demand your life in this *ill-spent* hour; what could you answer to Him, when "your spirit returned to the God who gave it?" What reply could you make to the charge of coming into his presence *unprepared?* It were in vain to urge that you were penitent in your heart, though you avowed it not; that you reverenced God, though you worshipped Him not; that you read the word of God, though you confessed it not; that you believed in his Son Jesus Christ, though you obeyed Him not! The question of your heavenly Judge would still recur—"Where is your obedience to my commandment—'Keep holy the Sabbath day?'"

But perhaps you have neglected the Sabbath less deliberately. Worldly concerns have so absorbed you, that you have found *no time* for the "one thing needful." As a man of business, calculation is of course familiar to you; and your great anxiety as an honest and flourishing man is to show at the year's end a good account—a good balance in your favour, after paying to every man his due. Apply this just and equitable principle as a Christian. You have not only a body to provide for, but also a soul to save. Shall you be anxious for the one, and careless for the other? That were to prove you a bad calculator indeed; it were to suppose you anxious about the lesser gain, and overlooking the greater gain. For if you could

heap up for the body riches beyond imagination to conceive, you, and those for whom you gather them, must leave them when you and they die; but if you wisely gain salvation for your soul, you gain that which shall never fail you, but shall endure through endless ages of eternity. Strike the balance, and you will feel in its just force the appeal of our Divine Teacher—"What is a man profited if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"—Think, moreover, that as your habits of business make you careful to render up "a good account at last,"—think, *when* that LAST will be! even at the day of judgment, when obedience will be found to have been not only true wisdom, but true gain; and the welfare of the soul to have been the one thing needful. Nor let it seem any palliation to your sin of Sabbath-breaking, that your worldly business so increased upon you that you found the six days not enough for its completion. To say nothing of the positive command of God, which condemns your practice, do you not, in the calm hour of sickness, feel yourself chargeable with the basest ingratitude? God has so blessed your worldly business, that the usual days are not sufficient "for doing all that you have to do." But are you *therefore* to oppose yourself to the command of Him who has so mercifully prospered you? Are you therefore to dishonour Him who has dealt so lovingly with you? Are you to make so base a return for added mercies? What a painful thought it must be to yourself, now you are of clear mind to observe the truth, to remember that when the Sabbath sun arose to call the congregation of the faithful before their God and Father, their Redeemer and Sanctifier, that they might let their light shine before men, and *confess* their Saviour-God not merely in their hearts, but publicly in their lives—*You*, one of the most favoured and prosperous; *you*, one who owed the very means which you made an excuse for sin, to the gracious Being who bade you to his holy house—*you*

were in *your own!* *You* made *that* day *yours*, which *He* requires to be made *his!* *You* occupied yourself in casting up your worldly gains, when *his* voice summoned you to take account of your soul, how *that* might stand prepared to give up its account to Him! It is a most awful thought that worldly blessings, which flow from the bounty of your heavenly Father, should be made the ground of opposing the will of the gracious Giver of them!—the extent of the ingratitude proportioned to the greatness of the blessing! Surely, O my reader, should God be pleased to restore you to health, the more you prosper in your worldly affairs, the more diligent you will be, if only on the principle of gratitude, to keep the Sabbath holy to the Lord, your God, your Benefactor. And if your concerns so extend and prosper, that, in order to be true to your worldly engagements, you must either be at charges for others to aid you during the six days, or resign part of your occupation—do not hesitate to do one or the other. Either is far better than losing the approbation of your great Benefactor, and with that, the approval of your own conscience, and the welfare of your soul. But whichever of these alternatives you prefer, be sure that you henceforth "keep the Sabbath holy;" and resolve in the spirit and language of the patriarch, that let others act as they list, you will keep the straight path of life —"Choose ye, this day, whom ye will serve: as for *me* and my house, *we* will serve the Lord."

Or perhaps you devote the Sabbath to worldly *pleasure*. Pause, my fellow-Christian, in a career so fatal to real pleasure, to your truest joys, and to your happiness both here and hereafter. It is proved by sad experience, that the first step to crime is Sabbath-breaking, where the youthful Christian breaks from the restraints of holy thoughts and holy services, casts from him the salutary season of quiet meditation, and resigns himself to the vanities and allurements of the

world. He *leads himself* into temptation [1]. For when can the devil find the soul more ready to receive evil impressions, than when it has wilfully and proudly cast off the guidance and protection of the Holy One [2]? The very struggles which every one must have, ere he can throw from him the services of the Sabbath, which he believes to be ordained of the Most High, leave him open to the delusions and wary suggestions of the tempter, who says, as of old, "Thou shalt not surely die [3];" thou shalt not surely be punished of God for this trivial offence.—And so because the Sabbath-breaker may perhaps for a season go on in his usual worldly prosperity, the subtle lie succeeds; pleasure is pursued; and the Divine counsel despised. Oh! would the young take counsel, how much present sorrow and future misery would they avoid! And what is the pleasure, which a Sabbath revel can afford you? It is at best but vanity; and too often sin and misery attend it. In the midst of your laughter, your heart is sad. You laugh, to check the rising sigh of conviction; you revel, to draw off the secret upbraidings of a disturbed conscience; you are noisy, to drown the "still small voice," which whispers you to return into the right way—"*This* is the path; walk ye in it." Henceforth try the pleasures which religion offers. The Spirit of truth assures us, that "at God's right hand are pleasures for evermore:" and though He dwelleth in heaven, where no man can approach unto, and we therefore cannot go to Him, He cometh to us, and where two or three are gathered together in his name, there is *He* in the midst of them. If you will keep the Sabbath-day holy, and

[1] It were no unsalutary reflection when we offer our prayer to God —"Lead us not into temptation,"—to consider whether we do not often cross our prayer by leading *ourselves* into temptation.

[2] If the soil be not cultivated, and good seed be sown, weeds spring up.

[3] Gen. iii. 4.

call it honourable to the Lord, you will soon find it "a delight" also[1]; you must find pleasure in feeling that God pardons your sins for Jesus Christ's sake, in whose name you have offered prayers for pardon. You must feel pleasure in being at peace with God, with your neighbour, and yourself. You must allow *that* to give pleasure, which enables you to hope for the favour of the Almighty here, and a share of his glories for ever.

There may however be some, who, even whilst they profess themselves servants of the Most High, and on the Lord's day both cease scrupulously from worldly business, and abstain strictly from worldly pleasure, yet offend on this point. Possibly you may be one of those who say, "It is true that I do not attend public worship, but I read my Bible at home on the Sabbath."—To read the Bible is our duty. But *what* do you find written there? Why the very command which you disobey. So, in fact, you mock God; and, virtually, defy Him. It is as if you said, "The Almighty, in his word, which I am reading, bids me keep the Sabbath day holy; and his Apostles, under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, have taught me to keep it holy in the congregation, by those public services, in which our blessed Lord, our example as well as our sacrifice, regularly joined; but *I* am good enough without this means of grace; I want no such religious assistance and comfort as the services of the congregation can give me. I shall stay at home, and still I shall be as good as your Sabbath-keepers." Mark the proud daring of this excuse! You, the being of an hour, array yourself against the eternal God! *He* ordains a means of grace, which will assist in training you for heaven; and *you* choose to think that you can be good enough for heaven without it. How different to the nobler spirit of David! He, too, scorned the mere formalities of worship—he, too, rejoiced to

[1] See Chapter xviii.

serve God with his whole heart; in spirit and in truth—he, too, prayed in secret, and sought the Lord in the retired hour of private devotion—he, too, studied the word of his God in his closet, and pondered it by himself to his joy and comfort: yet no rest had he, till he had *declared* this service, publicly, to the honour of his Lord. Far from him the half-service of a devout *feeling* only; his words, his actions, his whole bearing was to evidence him a bold and grateful servant of Jehovah: "I have declared thy righteousness in the *great congregation:* lo! I will *not refrain* my lips, O Lord! and that thou knowest. I have *not hid* thy righteousness within my heart: my *talk* hath been of thy truth and of thy salvation[1]." In your season of sickness think calmly of this matter, and you will at once condemn yourself, and wonder at your sin. You will wonder that a fallacy so slight, and one which so completely exposes its own weakness, could have deceived you: for whilst with every faithful Christian, you have condemned the unbeliever and the irreligious, the worldly and thoughtless, as risking the welfare of their souls; you have been forgetful of your own offence towards God. "Thou hast beheld the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considered not the beam that is in thine own eye[2]." You and they have acted in opposition to the same God, though in a different manner. The same holy book which commands us to believe, and to pray, and to crucify in our hearts the world, and rise above its vanities, commands us also, "to keep holy the Sabbath-day," by "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together[3]." I am sure, therefore, that however hitherto you may have unhappily attempted thus to excuse yourself to your own mind for a neglect of one of your solemn duties, you will not again seek so to justify yourself; because you will pause upon the whisperings of con-

[1] Ps. xl. 11, 12.

[2] Matt. vii. 3.

[3] Heb. x. 25. The tacit rebuke with which the Apostle closes his exhortation is severe and cutting—"as the manner of *some* is."

science—"Can this justify me to my God? When He unveils all my secret motives, and exposes all the delusions I have practised upon myself on this point, can it be sufficient answer that I knew my duty, but did it not, that I read his commands but obeyed them not? For I know from my Bible that obedience will be required as the only test of sincerity[1]."

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## CHAPTER XXII.

### THE SABBATH.

WHATEVER may hitherto have been your neglect of the Lord's day, I cannot but consider you as now having resolved never again to disregard an ordinance, founded by Divine wisdom, enjoined by Divine authority, stamped with Divine blessing, and hallowed by its Maker[2]. You will not dare defy Jehovah. You will rather dare henceforth to honour Him. Convinced also, how beneficial to mankind, collectively and individually, are the effects of this appointed day of holy rest, you readily allow, that even if human authority had originated an ordinance so wise and so merciful, to slight it were folly; to slight it then when the authority on which it rests is not of man, but of God, is but adding to the shame of folly the wickedness of sin. Lamenting, therefore, the awful daring of the profligate, who, passing the day in a reckless spirit of worldliness and dissipation, defies the great Being who made it, and calleth it his own[3]—avoid the inconsistency of those who, professing themselves servants

[1] Many Sabbath-breakers may unhappily pursue a course far more flagrant, more injurious to society, and more prejudicial to their own temporal interests; but none is more unreasonable, none more inconsistent, none more vain. For the Bible, to meditate upon which you stay at home, reproves your act. The *word* of God you *read*—the *will* of God you *disobey*.

[2] Exod. xx. 11.

[3] Ps. cxviii. 24.

of God and of his Christ, yet absent themselves from that worship, to which his word calls them; and conscious that your temporal and eternal welfare is, under the Divine blessing, best promoted by those holy services of penitence and prayer, in which the heart is occupied in the house of God, you resolutely for yourself, *obey* Him whom you *fear; honour* Him whom you *love;* and *seek* Him in whom you *confide*—keeping *his Sabbaths* HOLY.

But a question, perhaps, forces itself upon your mind, "Can nothing excuse my absence from the congregation on the Lord's day?"

It is clear that occasions will arise, when your public religious duties must be broken in upon, and regular attendance in the congregation rendered impossible. Your own present situation is a case in point. Sickness confines you to your home. Duty and affection detain around you those who minister to you, and by their soothing attentions ease your pains, or lessen them, and aid in reconciling you to them. So it is with all works of charity. The afflicted, the sick, the dying; they require our care at the hand of God. In tending them, we are doing the will of our heavenly Father, who "will have mercy and not sacrifice[1]." Our blessed Saviour too, who spake as never man spake, and taught as teacher never taught before, has further shown the distinction between an allowable absence from holy worship, and a culpable neglect of it, by his memorable admonition—"The Sabbath was made for man; not man for the Sabbath[2]."

[1] 1 Sam. xv. 22.

[2] Mark ii. 27.

The Christian Sabbath* allows and even requires, that we omit no duty of active charity and benevolence, on the plea of any outward Sabbath observances. Our blessed Saviour taught this plainly by example as well as by precept. St. Paul acted upon the requisition with his characteristic zeal; as the scene of a Christian Sabbath at Troas, presented to us by St. Luke, strikingly proves. The scene

* The word *Sabbath* means *Rest.*

Hence, whatever act is requisite to the real welfare of man, and tends to promote the honour of God, and cannot be deferred till the morrow, may be done on the Sabbath day. Such are, attendance on the sick, and relief of the afflicted, the succouring the distressed, and other occasions, which the reason of every man may discern for himself, and the conscience of every Christian may for himself determine.

Leaving, then, those extreme occasions of active duty as lawful exceptions to our attendance upon public worship, we must yet allow that no trifling

itself indeed is full of animating interest. The Church, being then of about thirty years' growth, had so increased, that wherever, in the more civilized parts of Europe and Asia, the Apostles had journeyed, they found, as at Troas, brethren in Christ Jesus to welcome them. The ordinances were observed with all due order and solemnity. The Lord's Supper was held in special reverence, and we find the brethren anticipating its celebration with such sincere piety, that the Apostle is induced to delay his voyage, in order that he might share their common worship. But before the administration of the holy rite, he preached to them—when towards the close of his preaching, one of the congregation fell from a height where he had placed himself, and was taken up for dead. Instantly the course of action was changed, because the course of duty was changed. Paul broke off the solemn service—and sought the suffering auditor. The call of distress was heard—the word of exhortation ceased. The house of mourning needed a comforter ; the house of the Lord was left unoccupied. The *voice* of faith was hushed—but the *act* of faith spake better things—for to "obey is better than sacrifice * :"—and who shall deny that the voice of suffering humanity appeals to the heart of man, as the voice of God ?

But the scene again changes. Life is restored ; and the Apostle, and brethren, and all the congregation return to their solemn service. Well may we imagine the glowing eloquence of a St. Paul, when, his whole soul having been inspired of Heaven to bring life to the dead, and himself wrapt in deepest gratitude for the mercy, signal as unlooked for, he returned to his holy office of preaching the word of God. We see the congregation also returning to finish their holy sacrifice of prayer and thanksgiving—offering their bounden duty and service !—With what zeal must they have raised the song of praise, when "they brought the young man alive !"—with what fervour would they join in the holy service, when the Apostle "was come up again, and breaking bread, did eat !"

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* Hos. vi. 6. "I desired mercy, and not sacrifice ; and the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings."

considerations should stand in the way of a duty so important. Nay, I would rather suggest, that the peace of mind consequent upon the fulfilment of the duty will not be lessened, if now and then it happen that our attendance in the congregration be accompanied with some personal inconvenience. Suppose even in things, which circumstances might render lawful to be done on the Lord's day, we practise a little self-denial and put those aside, in order that we may attend in his own house the Master we serve, and the Saviour we honour: our hearts will not glow with less delight, nor will our sleep be less sweet, when at the close of the day we remember that whilst we served the Lord, we denied ourselves. Indeed, as for any personal inconvenience which may sometimes arise to you and your family, from regular attendance in the congregation, it is all amply repaid by the satisfaction of reflecting, when the day closes, that though after our best services, we are all "unprofitable servants," yet no wilful omission of duty presses upon your conscience; no avoidable neglect of your blessed Redeemer; no intended slighting of your gracious Sanctifier. You have worshipped in spirit and in truth! You have obeyed the word in which you believe! Your hope, therefore, is not vain that God's blessing will follow your services, will shadow you amid the dangers and difficulties which again may meet you on resuming the duties of a busy world, and be your gracious guide unto death. Oh! how changed your feelings, even on the bed of sickness! Formerly when *unable*, from sickness or accident, to share on the Lord's day those services of his people in the congregation, which in health you had habitually disregarded, you were sunk in sadness and bitterness of spirit. In those silent hours of watchfulness, when the busy hum of the world was for a season hushed, conscience was busy with you, whispering many an unwelcome truth: none more unwelcome than your long neglect of the Sabbath. From your inmost

heart you then envied the worshippers whom you saw assembling together for the house of God. But now all is changed. Though unable to *appear* in the congregation personally, your thoughts bear you thither. *Now*, as you watch your fellow-Christians willingly hastening to their service—the flock of Christ gathering to their appointed pasture [1]—you resolve that, by God's grace assisting you, no sooner shall health and

[1] John xxi. 17. The Church of Christ is a flock, of which his appointed ministers are the shepherds. It was under this beautiful comparison that our Lord chose to convey to his Apostles his last charge—"Feed my sheep,"—a charge which, though addressed to Peter individually by name, was equally applicable to each of the Apostles.

But there seems a reason for the mention of Peter's name, without implying any superiority or pre-eminence of worth in him over the rest of the Apostles. It is true, that Peter had avowed a greater love for his Master than was felt by the other Apostles. Our Lord, however, had elicited this avowal only in illustration of the reasonable doctrine He had Himself laid down: "To whom little is forgiven the same loveth little,"—but "*he* will love his Lord most, to whom he forgiveth most*." Peter had signally sinned. He had been as fully forgiven. The sequel, therefore, is highly characteristic of the divine benevolence of his Master.

At the time the address was delivered, the memory of Peter must have retained too lively an impression of his late offence, to leave him otherwise than at least diffident of spirit, if not subdued in mind. The bitter tears of penitence for his denial of Christ had scarcely ceased to flow; his heart was still sorrowful; and it is probable he would have considered himself unworthy on this occasion to have been included at all in the high and holy office with which the other Apostles were then invested, had he not been thus specially addressed. We may well, therefore, suppose that the language held towards him throughout the interesting scene was the language of encouragement, as though his Lord had said—"What if in the moment of infirmity thou didst fall from thy stedfastness? thou hast not so greatly fallen but that thou art now raised up, and henceforth, tempering the ardour of thy zeal, thou wilt be faithful as thou art zealous. Wherefore to thee, as to the rest of thy brethren, I commit the care of my Church—the flock for which, as the good Shepherd, I have given my life. 'Feed' *thou* also 'my sheep.'"

Thus did the great Healer of the nations fulfil his gracious office of binding up the broken-hearted. He, who by his *look* pierced the heart of the conscience-stricken, and drew forth bitter tears of sorrow, by his *word* healed that wound; wiped away the tear of the peintent; gave to his faith new strength, and to his zeal new courage.

* Luke vii. 42 and 47.

strength be restored, than each returning Sabbath shall see *you* also joyfully confessing your Lord and Saviour in the courts of his house, according to his command; and your soul already pours forth its secret prayer to the Almighty, that when He heareth and answereth the supplications of his assembled people offered up for *themselves*, He will also mercifully hear the prayers they offer up for *you*[1]. You long to be of the goodly company. Your heart adopts the eager language of David—"As the hart desireth the water-brooks, so longeth my soul after thee, O God."

Thus may it be to thee, my Christian brother! And thus it *will* be to thee, if, with a true penitent heart and lively faith, thou dost turn in thy sickness unto the Lord thy God, pray for his Holy Spirit, follow its holy guidance, and rejoice in its holy consolations. Mayest thou increase in that Holy Spirit more and more—rejoicing in the service of thy God; and finding his Sabbaths thy joy[2]!

O God, we thank Thee for thy Sabbath day! we bless Thee for that thine holy ordinance! Give to us each, we pray Thee, grace so individually to feel its value, acknowledge its Divine authority, and rejoice in its holy comfort, that neither pride of reason may tempt us to hold its observance a matter of indifference, nor worldly business nor worldly pleasure withdraw us from its duties. May we by thy gracious and ready help, be strengthened to shun alike the daring of the profligate, who scorn the day; the indif-

[1] See the "Prayer for all Conditions of Men;" where we pray for *all* the sick and afflicted in mind, body, or estate. See also the corresponding supplication in the Litany; where we pray "for *all* sick persons;" and "for *all* that are in danger, necessity, and tribulation."

How does this appeal to Christian sympathy tend to soften the heart of stone, correct an uncharitable temper, and subdue the proudest spirit! We, too, some day, may be sick! *we* may be afflicted! *we* may be in danger, necessity, and tribulation. Let us at least pray for those, who are suffering evils, to which, though now, perhaps, we be free from them, we also are liable.

[2] Refer to page 112.

ference of the worldly, who value it not; and the hypocrisy of the self-righteous, who own its obligations, but regard them not. May we keep the Sabbath holy for thy great name's sake, as the day which Thou hast made especially thine own[1]! So may we find in its high and holy services a rest from the cares and sorrows of life, gain strength against the temptations of the world, and acknowledge "the house of God to be none other than the gate of heaven."

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## CHAPTER XXIII.

### THE LITURGY.—THE OPENING SENTENCES.

YOUR meditations cannot have been thus far pursued, without leading you to a conviction that the appointment of a Sabbath is an inestimable blessing to mankind, and that every man is bound to keep it holy by serving the Lord with holy worship. If so, the present would seem a favourable opportunity for directing your attention to the excellence and value of those appropriate services in our Liturgy, which our Church provides for congregational worship —services which, the more closely we examine them, we shall see, more and more clearly, to be in most strict and beautiful harmony with the word of God. It is, therefore, no wonder that we shall find them also adapted to the feelings of the devout soul, which,

[1] Ps. cxviii. 24. "This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it."—True it is, that the Lord made *every* day. Time itself is but a part of the great creation—a portion of eternity: adapted to a dispensation which is limited, and will cease when that dispensation shall close: for when this world shall have passed away, "time itself shall be no longer." Rev. x. 6. But the Sabbath is peculiarly the day which the Lord hath made his own, by Himself resting on that day from his labours; hallowing it, and blessing it.

under a sense of sin and infirmity is anxious to pour forth before its God, meet expressions of penitence, supplication, and thanksgiving.

I would now, then, endeavour to lead you to a more serious contemplation of our excellent Liturgy; in order that if health be restored to you, and you again join the congregation in the courts of the Lord's house, "with one accord making common supplications," you may more thoroughly feel the force of the expressions you use: for the better you understand them, the more you will feel them; and whilst you "pray with the spirit, you will pray with the understanding also [1]."

It must forcibly strike an attentive reader of the Gospel, that every page of it breathes the voice of *encouragement*. It is true that punishment is for the wicked, and reward for the righteous; but all are invited to become righteous, and to all, the way of righteousness is equally open. If the Lord "hath included all in unbelief," it is, "that he may have mercy upon all [2]." The same spirit of encouragement pervades our Liturgy. It opens with the glorious assurance of Almighty God, that "when the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive [3]." And well it is that its services thus open. For where is he among the sons of men, who without such encouragement would not be afraid to approach that Almighty Being, whom he must be conscious of so oft offending? And who can tell the fulness of comfort which the words must

[1] 1 Cor. xiv. 15.

[2] Rom. xi. 32.

[3] Ezek. xviii. 27. It would be very instructive, if in your season of sickness you would give to these opening sentences of our Liturgy more particular attention than, perhaps, you have hitherto done. They are full of encouragement to the humble soul; they strengthen the weak, and confirm the strong, and prepare the hearts of all for a nearer approach to their Father and their God.

I would earnestly advise you to study and apply them.

convey to the lowly and contrite one, who, bending perhaps under his load of unworthiness, might not dare to join his offending fellow-creatures in their high and holy services? We may suppose him, like the prodigal, once to have forsaken his Father's house, and to have wasted his time and his substance in vanity and wickedness. *Now*, not only desirous to return thither, but powerfully encouraged so to do, he adopts the affecting language of that penitent: "I will arise and go to my father." Nor does any doubt mark his faith when he trusts in his Father's love to extend towards him forgiveness. The blessed assurance is brought before him in all its fulness, that "to the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses though we have rebelled against him[1];" and however the self-righteous, the indifferent, and the worldly may say, "that they have no sin," and, persisting in this error, deceive themselves, the truth not being in them; yet no sooner do we confess our sins, than God in the infinity of his power, and the plenitude of his mercy, "is *faithful* and *just* to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness[2]."

Thus every excuse is removed from those who hold forth their own unworthiness, as a reason for not drawing near to the great and holy God in prayer. Of himself, no man is worthy to approach the throne of grace. But through Jesus Christ all are exhorted to approach it, that by his merits and mediation they may be rendered fit objects of the Divine mercy.

[1] How peculiar is the strength of this expression—"To the Lord our God *belong* mercies"—mercies and forgivenesses are his characteristics. To have mercy and to forgive is, as it were, his peculiar property and right. Dan. ix. 9.

[2] It were *much* that infinite undeserved *mercy* should forgive us. It is *more* when Divine *justice* has been so fully satisfied by the sacrifice of Christ, that mercy and truth can meet together, and that God's *faithfulness* and *justice* are made perfect in our forgiveness.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### THE EXHORTATION.

The penitent thus encouraged to return to his heavenly Father, and all of us reminded, that as the best of the sons of men cannot of themselves stand justified in the sight of an heart-searching God, the lowliest spirit best becomes the worshipper—the minister, as the steward of the mysteries of God, proceeds to remind the congregation of the solemn duty of confession, as a fit preparative for their further service of supplication and thanksgiving; animating them to the duty by an exhortation no less affectionate in its manner of address, than in itself powerful and searching [1].

The minister addresses the congregation earnestly and affectionately as his "dearly beloved brethren;" including himself in the number of those "who ought at all times humbly to acknowledge their sins before God"—himself a fellow-servant in the house of the Lord. The address then proceeds to lay open the many various intricacies of the human heart with equal skill and boldness; warns against the deceits to which *they* have recourse, who, by calling evil good, and good evil, would fain conceal from God their real motives of action, and throw a veil over the true character of their conduct; exposes the folly of attempting to deceive God, whilst men deceive themselves; and at once strips off the flimsy pretexts of

[1] It is observable in this address, that the minister includes himself in the admonitory clauses—and holds the congregation of penitents as his brethren—himself joining in every expression of humility and lowliness. Whilst, however, he frankly avows himself but a fellow-servant of the same Lord, he sustains the high authority of his *office* with the boldness which becomes an appointed steward of the Lord's household; and he never dares to forget, that "it is required in stewards, that *a man be found faithful*." 1 Cor. iv. 2.

self-deceit. And as even reason must allow, that confession to a heart-searching God is but mockery, unless itself be from the very depth of the heart; so in proportion as the blessings attending a hearty confession of our sins, negligences, and ignorances are great, it is important that our confession be sincere. Hence we are warned against any vain attempt to conceal from God the evil of our doings [1]. We are neither, like Saul and Ananias, to "dissemble;" nor, like Gehazi, are we to "cloke our sin [2]." Thus we shall cast away *false* shame. We shall be *ashamed* of our *sins*, *not* of our *sorrow* for them. Still less shall we be ashamed to confess before men *that* Saviour to whom alone we look as the meritorious cause of our pardon and reconciliation with a justly offended God. The heart, now freed from its dreadful burden of sin long concealed—long cherished—is light, and open to every kindly, every happier feeling. By this open confession before our assembled fellow-creatures, we not only wisely humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, who in due time exalteth the humble and meek, but we learn the useful lesson of bearing more patiently with each other's infirmities. Indeed, no consideration avails more to preserve harmony in society; to promote that "peace on earth, and good-will towards men," which angels heralded when the Prince of peace was born into the world, than this spirit of humility. How often is anger against others for their faults towards us, even just anger perhaps, checked [3], when we have kept in our hearts a lively impression of our own liability to error; of our own infirmities; of our own manifold offences before the Being, of whom we pray, that *He* will forgive *us, as* we forgive *others!* If *infinite* mercy be required to forgive *us*, we cannot be too humble, or too forgiving,

[1] Ps. lxxiii. 11.
[2] 1 Sam. xv. 15. Acts v. 2. 2 Kings v. 25.
[3] Ephes. iv. 26. "Be ye angry, and sin not."

as sinners whose pardon needs so much forbearance from our God.

Thus prepared, we more hopefully proceed to the duty of confession—a duty which, though at all times necessary for weak and erring man, is "most chiefly so," when we "assemble and meet together;" for our gracious Lord has then promised to the worshipper the assured blessing of his presence.

That the Divine blessing specially shadows the congregation of the faithful, none can doubt. "God is in the midst of them." But it is both instructive and comforting to the faithful few,—who, "neither weary in well doing," nor deterred either by any difficulties which their own particular circumstances may occasion, or by the obstacles which the scoffing of the wicked may raise, frequent perseveringly the public service of their God,—to consider the *manner* in which our blessed Saviour has declared the blessing of his presence. He does not confine it to the vast assemblage of multitudes; but assures us, that however few be the numbers who assemble in *his* name, even if only two or three be so gathered together, they shall be met by the blessing of his presence [1]. Our Church in this exhortation, avails herself of that gracious assurance with a marked solicitude which I cannot forbear pointing out to you. Whether her assembled sons be in full multitude, or a scattered few, she invites them with equal earnestness and with promise of equal blessing to draw near to the throne of grace. There is something very affecting in her allusion to those who are *not* there present. In the heart of every devout worshipper the anxious thought naturally arises—"Where are the absent servants of our Divine Master? Does sickness confine them to their homes; or any work of charity and

Wherefore, I pray and beseech you, *as many as are here present.*

[1] Matt. xviii. 20. "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

necessity? Or are they the slaves of the world—its business or its pleasures? Are they gone, the one to his farm, the other to his merchandise; withholding the *one* day from *Him* who gives to them every day? Are they gaining for themselves blessing—or are they wilfully casting blessing from them?" How powerfully such reflections fill the heart of the minister, as he looks around the flock committed to his charge, every sincere Christian can feel. It is *then* that he finds consolation in the Saviour's gracious promise, that "where two or three"—where only a few—are gathered together in *his* name, there is "he in the midst of them." Sustained by that promise, he declares the glad tidings of pardon and peace, proceeds in his holy ministration, and rejoices in the glorious truth, that the Divine presence is with his flock; that no diminution of assembled numbers causes diminution of divine grace; for in the heart of the lowliest worshipper Jehovah Himself dwelleth. It is not enough that of his *mercy* "God despiseth not the sighing of a contrite heart;"—in his infinite *love* He "dwelleth with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit[1]." Thus the minister is bold to encourage the lowliest individual. Even for *him* are poured out in the Gospel the full riches of the grace of the Almighty.

The subject forcibly reminds me of the vehement grief of one of the fathers of the early Church, when he observed his congregation thinned of their numbers, by many having withdrawn themselves from divine service, for the purpose of attending some public amusement; and *that*, at a time when any such defection from religious duty was not less a matter of surprise, than a cause of grief. The people had been lately threatened with devastation of their lands by a dreadful flood of waters, and had sought refuge in prayer. The terrors of the Lord, whose hand they acknowledged in the awful visitation, had persuaded

[1] Isa. lvii. 15.

them[1]. Yet no sooner had their prayers been answered, and the dreaded calamity been averted, than they returned to their worldliness. Their anxious pastor cherished the fond hope that the flame of devotion which fear had excited, gratitude would have kept alive. But his hopes were frustrated. Their devotion was as transient as their fear. With the return of safety, returned forgetfulness of their Saviour. Upon this he takes occasion to deliver one of his noblest and most animated expostulations, upon the unchristian course which he at once laments and condemns; giving expression to his own feelings of pain in a strain equally dignified and affecting. After exclaiming in the vehemence of his concern for God's honour —"Are these things to be borne? is this conduct to be endured? how are we again to propitiate God—how avert his wrath?" he observes—"few days have passed, since in terror lest a flood of waters should have swept away your corn, already ripe for harvest, the whole city[2], with its vast tide of population, was seen hurrying to join the service of supplication and prayer. But no sooner does Divine goodness avert its wrath, and we rejoice with spiritual joy, than, neither warned by past danger, nor instructed by a gracious answer to our prayers, you plunge at once into worldliness and sin." "As for myself, sitting in my house on my return home, and hearing the mingled voices of those slaves to worldly pleasure, I endure a severer conflict of feeling than the tempest-tossed mariner. Every sound is borne to me, like the beating of the wave as it dashes upon the vessel's side; and my heart sinks within me; till with eyes fixed on the ground, I remain the image of shame. Well may our foes apply their taunt—'Are these the followers of Christ[3]?'"

[1] 2 Cor. v. 11. [2] Constantinople.

[3] The same eloquent father of the Church—when, in refutation of those who held in scorn his anxious care for each *individual* soul committed to his charge, he argued the high and awful responsibility of

Is there not to each minister of Christ the same responsibility now? Is there not upon each shepherd of a Christian flock now the same charge? Is not the soul of *each* individual of the flock as precious in the sight of God *now* as at the moment when the Saviour hung upon the cross, and there poured out his soul unto death? Surely then our Church engages the sympathy of every faithful heart, when, in her exhortation to the assembled congregation, she thus gently but affectingly calls to mind, that some of the flock might yet be wandering in the wilderness, and forsaking the rich pastures to which the appointed Shepherd's voice would lead them! What heart can withhold its secret prayers from *them?*

the ministerial office, and the necessity of imitating the good Shepherd, who, leaving the ninety and nine in the wilderness, sought out the one lost sheep—breaks forth into the following affecting and energetic strain: "Tell me not, that *only one* brother is in peril! Rather ponder well, that thy brother is a being, who is so specially cared for by God, and for whom so great things have been done, that for him the precious blood hath been shed, and a great price hath been paid. For him the heavens were ordained, the sun was lighted up, the moon runs her course, the choral * stars glow with their varied splendour, the air is spread around, the sea is poured out, the foundations of the earth laid; the fountains gush forth, the rivers flow, the mountains are made strong; for him the meadows and the gardens smile; for him seeds, and trees, and plants, in all their variety, flourish; for him are all things which the mountains and the deserts, the cities and the plains, the groves and the hills supply. The immeasurable swarms of fishes; the various kinds of animals and birds are ordained for his service. For him, the prophets and Apostles lived and taught. For him were displayed the numberless wonders they record. But why should I thus enumerate the marvellous proofs of God's love for the soul of each man? For *him*, in his individuality, the only begotten Son of God became man; and being made man, was slain."—Chrysostom, Hom. 3. Matt. ix. 37.

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* Job xxxviii. 7. "When the morning stars *sang together*, and all the sons of God shouted for joy."

## CHAPTER XXV.

### A GENERAL CONFESSION.

When the mind is deeply impressed with its own sinfulness, it readily turns to the duty of confession, as the appointed condition of forgiveness [1]. Our blessed Lord, as He taught his disciples to pray day by day for daily bread, taught them also the duty of daily prayer for forgiveness. Hence our Church, whose liturgy is throughout eminently scriptural, leads the congregation to a *general confession*, before they proceed to supplication and thanksgiving.

The address is so worded, that whilst the sinner is rebuked, the penitent is soothed. The Being whom by our sins we have offended, is indeed "Almighty" —powerful to punish. He is also our "*Father*"—our "*most merciful*" Father, willing to save to the uttermost. And shall a son, if truly penitent under a sense of unworthiness, fear to ask pardon of *such* a Being? "If ye, being evil," argues our Divine Teacher, "know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father, which is in heaven, give good things to them that ask him [2]." Surely *He* will not refuse pardon to the returning wanderer.

Almighty and most merciful Father;

Still guided by the teaching of the Saviour, who compares a sinner to a lost sheep in the wilderness, our Church directs us to approach the Lord, as wandering sheep returning to the Shepherd of their souls. And sure it is, that men are tempted to evil by the

[1] 1 John i. 8, 9. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." See p. 119. Note.

[2] Matt. vii. 11.

wicked one, whenever they forsake his guidance, who fain would direct them into the paths of safety and of peace. Jesus, Himself the Good Shepherd, is ready to guide us by his word, and keep us by his Spirit, but in the bustle of the world we heed Him not. Then comes sickness; and in the weary silent hours of watchfulness and pain, the still small voice reaches our hearts; we are convinced at length of our sin, folly, and danger; and our hearts condemn us. Conviction moves the soul to repentance; repentance opens the lips to confession; and faith whispers the encouraging truth, that the Shepherd, when He has found his sheep which was lost, will bear it on his shoulders home, and rejoice that the lost is found [1]. In truth, when sickness gives time for reflection, we soon learn that we have thus strayed from the ways of God, because we have "followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts." What these devices and what these desires are, every man knows from his own sin and the plague of his own heart. In sin were we born; to sin are we ever by nature inclined; and unless nature yield to grace, in sin shall we continue. It is therefore no wonder, that by following the devices of our own hearts, "we offend against God's holy laws." Nor is any worldly learning required to be certified in what our offence consists. We offend God our heavenly Father, whenever "we leave undone those things which we ought to do; or do those things which we ought not to do." Here we can judge ourselves. The Bible—the gift which is free alike to the poor and the rich, the unlearned and the learned, the simple and the wise, to subjects and their rulers—the Bible, with equal clearness and power, marks out the line of duty which every man should pursue in that state of life, to which it may please God to call him. There we find golden rules

We have erred and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep.

[1] Luke xv. 5.

for a good and righteous life, in sickness and in health, in riches and in poverty, in lowliness and in power. Thus, wherever we have omitted to do right, or persisted in doing wrong, we may "judge ourselves [1]." Whilst we continued in error and wrong, there was no "health in us"—no *spiritual* health. We had no energy for the duties of a spiritual life. As the sick body refuses its wonted exertions in the concerns of this world, so the sick soul has no power for its appointed work in preparing for the next world: no energy for the work of self-examination, self-control, faith, obedience, hope. It languishes in sins either of omission or commission—doing those things which should be left undone, or not doing those things which ought to be done.

From a state so sad, thy mercy, O God, alone can set us free. To thee, therefore, the penitent turns; in deep humility, indeed, but in firm faith, that thou, in thy *fatherly mercy*, wilt have compassion upon him.

But thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable offenders.

We cannot but believe that a heavenly Father will compassionate his once erring children, who desire to return unto Him; and who, long *miserable* under a consciousness of sin, rather meet the just shame of confession, than under assumed hardihood of indifference, suffer the real misery of a sick and wounded conscience [2]. The appeal we humbly trust to be available, because founded upon the Divine promises, already considered—the promises of covenanted pardon on confession [3]. God hath promised! He "is not a man that he should lie!" O the infinite mercy which thus allows to the lowly penitent a hope which maketh not ashamed; a hope which can conquer false shame in the presence

Spare thou them, O God, which confess their faults. Restore thou them that

[1] 2 Cor. xiii. 5. "Examine yourselves. Prove your ownselves."

[2] Sin is with peculiar propriety represented as a sickness or disease. Refer to p. 2.

[3] Refer to the Note, p. 119.

of his fellow-creatures; overcome the reproaches even of his own conscience; give him spiritual health and strength to retrace his erring steps; and make him to go on his way rejoicing.

are penitent; According to thy promises declared unto mankind in Christ Jesu our Lord.

The penitent, however, rests not here. His memory of past misery is too recent not to cause a dread of its recurrence. He therefore implores his reconciled Father that He would never leave him to the devices and desires of his own heart, but would, by his preventing and following grace, guide him into the way of peace. Observe the truly humble feelings which confession of sin and unworthiness has induced. We venture thus to pray for forgiveness and pardon, and compassion—only for *another's sake*. Ours is the language of the returning prodigal[1]. "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants."

And grant, O most merciful Father, for his sake; That we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life, to the glory of thy holy name. Amen.

But suppose that we dare not claim the *love* of our God, as ground of hope that He would pardon and forgive us—we then plead his own name and honour's sake. We beseech Him to save and defend us for *his own* sake. We earnestly implore Him, that as He of old declared Himself the defender of his faithful people, not for *their* sakes, but *his own*; "because he loved them, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto their fathers," for his "name and honour's sake[2];" so He would be pleased to hear and answer, and pardon and sanctify *us* now, for the glory of his holy name.

It is observable that this is termed a *general* confession; both because it is made by the congregation *generally*, without exception, minister and people; all men being in God's sight sinners—and because it is

[1] Luke xv. 18, 19. [2] Deut. xvii. 7.

an avowal of our *sinfulness* in *general.* Particular sins are to be recalled to our own minds, and specified before God alone, in our private confession, and in our private prayers. Enough, that before man we own our sinful state, in proof that we need the pardon we implore. By this judicious and seasonable forbearance towards the particular sins of the assembled penitents, the form of confession is adapted to every variety of disposition: calculated equally to check the presumption of self-righteousness; to regulate and direct the fervour of zeal; to sustain the drooping spirit of the contrite, and to win all men to the service of Christ. The congregation was also to be *general* in the *avowal* of their sinfulness and their repentance: not only to *kneel* and fall down before the Lord their Maker, but with one accord to speak together the language of humility and contrition: accompanying the minister not with "a pure heart only," but with a "humble *voice*, unto the throne of the heavenly grace."

Nor let the *manner* in which we are directed to offer this confession be thought of little moment. Our glorious Redeemer Himself, when He prayed for aid from his heavenly Father, "kneeled down[1]." Indeed,

[1] Luke xxii. 41. It is well observed by a Christian philosopher of the present day, that "the posture and the expression of reverence are universally the same in every period of life, in all stages of society, and in every clime; and that when pious thoughts prevail, man's countenance is turned from things earthly to the purer objects above: for a reverential posture is natural to man, when 'strong emotions of reverence and piety' fill his soul. And here," as he wisely shows, "there is a link in this relation every way worthy of attention; a correspondence of the mind, the frame, and external nature, by which man is directed to lift up his eyes to the hills, 'whence cometh his salvation,' and not to look for help from this lower world *." Nor did it escape the philosophic mind of one of the famous heathen poets, that whilst other animals are so framed that their look is directed downwards, towards the earth, man stands erect, with his eyes naturally directed upward, as tending to that heaven for which he was originally created.

> "Man stands erect; his countenance
> To Heaven upturn'd: as though Heaven's word
> Did bid him, whilst he fix'd his *gaze* on high,
> On high to bear his *thoughts*."

* See Bell's "Bridgewater Treatise."

whenever He was more deeply affected with any sentiment of compassion towards others, which led Him to pray for them—or whenever He was labouring under any more violent mental agony, which induced Him to pour out supplications for Himself—his look and his posture corresponded to his feelings. Thus, when seeking blessings on his gracious miracle of feeding the multitude with five loaves and a few fishes—He "first lifted up his eyes to heaven[1]." And when He was preparing Himself for judgment and death, He "kneeled down and prayed." His thoughts found due utterance; and his feelings appropriate expression. It were, indeed, much to be wished, that in this and other parts of our Church service, where the congregation are directed to join with the *voice*, they would do so *audibly*. The advantages of such a practice are manifold. By adding to the solemnity of the service it encourages the assembled worshippers to more earnestness; it is a proof that we are not ashamed of Him who is the friend of sinners: and it renders the whole office far more impressive upon ourselves and others. The attention is kept alive. The mind finds it impossible to wander from its object, where the voice is deliberately uttering its feelings, whether of penitence or praise. Wherefore it is not without reason that in this general confession of sin, in which all are equally concerned, the *voices* of all the congregation should be joined with the minister; and that at its close, *all* the people, with one heart and soul, should so pour forth their willing testimony to the truths uttered, by a solemn *Amen*.

[1] Matt. xiv. 19.

# CHAPTER XXVI.

## THE ABSOLUTION.

As the Son of God "came into the world to save sinners[1]," so repentance and confession are the appointed conditions on which sinners become entitled to the salvation offered through Him. Hence they who do heartily repent, and humbly confess their sins, are declared to be absolved from them[2].

In thus, however, offering absolution to the penitent, our Church acts not upon her own authority, nor do her ministers assume to themselves any superiority of holiness, by virtue of which remission of sins can be conveyed from them to others. The authority is that of the Saviour Himself; and by virtue of his merits alone is remission of sins held forth. For though our Lord assured his Apostles; and through them now assures the ministers of the Gospel, their appointed successors,—"whose soever sins ye remit they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained[3],"—yet it is clear, as well from the dictates of common sense, and the reason of things, as from the whole tenor of the Gospel, that the minister is not empowered by these words to grant or withhold absolution according to his own arbitrary will. He cannot search the heart. How then can he judge

Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who desireth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he may turn from his wickedness and live; and hath given power and commandment to his Ministers, to declare and pronounce to his people, being penitent, the Absolution and Remission of their sins: he pardoneth and absolveth all them that truly repent, and unfeignedly believe his holy Gospel.

[1] 1 Tim. i. 15.

[2] Luke xxiv. 46, 47. "Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that *repentance* and *remission of sins* should be preached in his name."

[3] John xx. 23.

the secret faults, and inward offences of his erring fellow-creatures? How know the sincerity and extent of their repentance? The absolution, therefore, is framed in the form of a *declaration;* and the blessing is stated as being *conditional. God* pardoneth and absolveth. The minister, as the servant of God, *declares* that truth. Yet is not this pardon—this absolution—irrespective as to its objects? To those who continue in sin; to those who make a mock at sin; to those who are regardless of the consequences of sin; no pardon is pronounced, no absolution declared. The minister declares and pronounces the blessing to those who "truly repent, and unfeignedly believe his holy Gospel." Thus, every individual in the congregation is left to judge himself, that he be not judged of the Lord. Every individual knows whether he does repent and believe; or whether he is hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, and continues in unbelief; and he can judge accordingly: he can judge for himself whether the pardon and absolution are for him.

Observe with what care all ground of offence and cause of error are avoided. It is not said that God has given to his ministers power and command, of themselves, to forgive sinners. They are to declare and pronounce to the assembled congregation of penitents that "*He*"—namely, *God*—"pardoneth and absolveth." For "who can forgive sins, but God only[1]?"

Hence, the minister, whilst he speaketh with authority, speaketh not as one having authority in himself, but as deriving it from the Divine Master, whose servant he is; and whose authority none can safely gainsay, even when exercised by a fellow-servant. The ambassador is a subject,—but the message bears the authority of the Sovereign whose subject he is[2].

[1] Mark ii. 7.

[2] "Now then *we* are *ambassadors* for Christ: as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." 2 Cor. v. 20.

To impress this as the just view to be taken of the absolution, it closes with an earnest and affectionate *admonition* from the minister; who, anxious that when blessing so great is at hand, we fall not short of it by neglect of the conditions by which it is accompanied, proceeds to address us in a strain which is at once plain, affectionate, and awakening.

Warned first to "examine ourselves," and "prove our ownselves," whether ours be a *true* repentance, we are admonished not to trust to our own strength for continuing holy and just and good. Have we fallen and recovered? we shall stand upright only in the strength of the Lord. Wherefore, with earnest prayer we are to beseech Almighty God to give us not only true repentance for the past, but also his Holy Spirit—to *guide* us for the *present* time, and *guard* us for the *future*. To the power and influence of that Spirit we must look for the strength and wisdom which are to keep us in a perfect way. So only can we hope that "those things may please him which we do at this present, and that the rest of our life hereafter may be pure and holy"—pure in thought and holy in practice. And if this Spirit be our help, why need we doubt our power? It is the *promised* guide and comforter; promised to be with us always, even unto the end of the world—able and willing to teach us all things. In this admonitory close of the Absolution, the reader will notice that the minister no longer addresses the congregation in a tone of authority, but with the affectionate earnestness of a fellow-worshipper, who, himself equally with them needing pardon and forgiveness for the past, is equally dependent upon divine grace for the future. "Wherefore, let *us* beseech him to grant *us* true repentance, and his holy Spirit."

Wherefore let us beseech him to grant us true repentance, and his holy Spirit; that those things may please him which we do at this present, and that the rest of our life hereafter may be pure and holy;

That our Church thus earnestly exhorts to the duty of repentance, on the ground of its paramount neces-

sity, and affectionately moves us to heed her exhortations by the promise of pardon and absolution, is no marvel. The object to be gained by repentance and remission of sins is too vast not to demand all our energy, all our exertion, all our watchfulness; it is no less than the attainment of eternal felicity. What a startling reflection does this expression excite in the soul—"So that at the *last!*" Reader, that *last* must come to you and to me. The last word, the last look, the last breath! And then—what new scenes will open upon us! scenes, where peace and rest, and joy await the righteous; where pain and woe and anguish are prepared for the wicked. O that *last!* what will bring a man peace *then*, but that true repentance, and that holy life, to which here we are so strenuously exhorted, and so gloriously encouraged? Be thine that holy life of penitence! for the penitent and the holy, God pardons and absolves, and blesses at *the last.* And where is he who would exchange peace at the *last moment*, for all which sin could give through a *whole life?* The wide world contains not the man, who at that moment would make such exchange. *You* will yourself one day know what that *last* is, which shall close upon this short, transitory state of being; ending its cares and pains and sorrows, and opening upon a new and eternal world; where the joys are unchanging, and the woes eternal! Choose *now* between the two. Sickness has already in part weaned you from sin and worldliness: complete the good work by a wise care for your immortal soul; and remember that at "the last," eternal joy may be your own, if you *then* be found among the number of the faithful.

So that at *the last* we may come to his eternal joy, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

And lest any should think that even repentance and obedience can merit aught in effecting their salvation, we are instructed to offer up our hopeful prayer, in the name and mediation of Jesus Christ. So sure is the truth, that "neither is there salvation in any other, for

there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved[1]."

When health is restored, and you again join the congregation, and hear the minister declare this welcome absolution, offer up a secret, but heartfelt prayer, that Almighty God would grant *you* for *yourself individually*, true repentance for the past, and vouchsafe his Holy Spirit for the future: so that you may please Him both in will and deed; may look forward without fear to that awful *last* hour which is to pass you to your eternal home; and may live prepared to meet your God.

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## CHAPTER XXVII.

### PARDON.

SUPPOSE a criminal, justly doomed to the dreadful forfeiture of life, suddenly to find his forfeiture remitted to him; the penalty paid; the offence freely and fully forgiven. Restored to new life, with what ecstasy does he spring again to the exercise of it! Joy fills his heart; the very air he breathes is enjoyment; existence itself, blessing. He has regained life, and he asks no more. However poor and lowly his state now be, and by whatever conditions it be held, still the dreaded shadow of death hath passed away; he lives; and to him life is all. So is every one, who, once dead in trespasses and sin, and justly under that condemnation which is awarded to the sinner[2], "turneth from his wickedness which he hath committed, doeth that which is lawful and right, and saveth his soul alive[3]." He repents and is pardoned; for the Redeemer has already paid the penalty, and the blood of the Holy One hath washed

[1] Acts iv. 12.
[2] Ezek. xviii. 4. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die."
[3] Ezek. xviii. 27. Refer to page 118.

away the sin. On that Holy One he rests his faith; and he finds peace and joy in believing.

Is not this your own case? You have sinned; you have repented; you have confessed; you have been pardoned, "according to God's promises declared unto mankind through Jesus Christ our Lord." When in that holy name, you heard the minister, who had received "power and commandment thereto, declare the same to *all* them that *truly* repent, and unfeignedly believe his holy Gospel," you felt that He pronounced pardon and remission of sins to *you;* and your heart rejoiced. Indeed, if one condemned to temporal punishment rejoices, when pardon is pronounced, and the fearful penalty remitted—if in the heart of one so set free, joy and gratitude strive for the mastery; with what measureless joy, with what unbounded gratitude, must your heart be filled at hearing the glad tidings —"Thy sins be forgiven thee!" and with what joyful readiness must you receive with the gracious gift its appointed conditions—"Go, and sin no more!" It is much that life is preserved to the body for a few years. It is surely more that life is restored to the soul *for ever.*

You are well aware that repentance is a duty not only in those whose offences are more flagrant, and of a deeper dye; but also in the case of every fallen son of Adam; and consequently, that pardon is a blessing to others, besides those to whom may be remitted sins of a heavier character. In the sight of a holy God can no man living be justified. Before Him we must all confess ourselves sinners. Hence our Divine Master, in teaching his servants a daily prayer, included a petition for daily forgiveness. And *that* for his immediate disciples—for men, who though marked, alas! with infirmity, were, with one exception, even as brethren to their Lord; declared, for their excellence, to be the salt of the earth[1]; men, whose example and

[1] Matt. v. 13.

teaching were to give a new tone and character to human conduct. Yet even they were taught to pray daily for pardon. Forgiveness then, being thus required daily, by *us all*, I would remind you of the present golden opportunity, for calm reflection, to examine well your own heart, and see "if there be *any* way of wickedness in it[1]." Sift your actions, your words, your motives. Compare them with the revealed will of God, and judge them by that. Are they such as his word sanctions—his Spirit approves? If you have wilfully broken any of his known laws, "go, and sin no more." Nay, in this your hour of serious meditation, weigh well those "*negligences* and ignorances" also, which, as our Church reminds us, must by grace be pardoned, ere by mercy they are unpunished[2]. Does memory array against you neglect of the word of God, neglect of his Sabbaths, neglect of his ordinances —those appointed means of grace? Repent—heartily! resolve, that when again health be restored, you will not shame to confess by a holy and religious life, your past sin and folly in having so long neglected your God. So may confession bring pardon, and pardon peace. Have you by thought, word, or deed injured your neighbour; or neglected to do him such service as it might have been in your power to render him? Does conscience reproach you with words of hatred without cause? with slandering your neighbour's fame? with striking at his peace and comfort, through

[1] Ps. cxxxix. 23, 24. "Try me, O God, and seek the ground of my heart: prove me, and examine my thoughts. Look well if there be *any* way of wickedness in me; and lead me in the way everlasting."

This is one of the noblest strains of sincere penitence, with which language can furnish us. The penitent is so thoroughly set upon a sincere and entire cleansing of his soul from sin and infirmity, that, despairing of his own power for the task, he implores the Almighty Himself by his Spirit to effect the work. Upon Omnipotence he relies to complete his repentance, and *then*, to lead him into the way everlasting.

[2] Beautiful as every part of the Litany is, there is something specially striking in the petition for pardon for "our *ignorances*."

envy[1], or hatred, or uncharitableness?—If conscience does thus reproach you, I am sure the reproaches must be sad and bitter. So long indeed as anger lasted, you might feel a lamentable satisfaction in causing pain to any one you hated or envied; and might have a secret

[1] There is no petition which we should more heartily offer up than that against the sin of envy. "From *envy*, hatred, and malice, and all uncharitableness—*Good Lord, deliver us!*" Our own resolves are all too weak to trust in.

Trifling as the feeling of envy may be considered in a religious point of view, its effects upon Christian temper and Christian practice are so formidable, as well to justify the solemn prayer against it, which our Church, in the Litany, teaches us to offer; when she directs, that we pray Almighty God, by "*his* power to deliver us." If indeed envy were found in the breast only of the indigent and houseless wanderer, we should be less surprised that in his want and wretchedness he eagerly craved some share of those comforts—perhaps even of those necessaries of life, which he sees to overflow to others. But far deeper seated is this evil; far more widely spread. Not confined to the poor, and needy, and "them who have none to help them," it often ranges the domains of the most wealthy, and accompanies the success of the most powerful; and wherever it passeth, there, like a withering blight, its path is fatal. Worth and merit—domestic affection and friendly intercourse—whatever we owe of duty to God and love to man—all are sacrificed to its poisonous breath. How often does even a rich man, if he be envious of another, who may enjoy some advantage with which he may not be blessed—whether it be learning, or station, or even contentment—cherish the baneful feeling, till it gradually produces hatred, malice, and uncharitableness? The desire of attaining that one thing, yet unpossessed, rankles in his bosom, till, like another Ahab towards Naboth, he hates the very virtues of the object of his envy; so bitter to him is it to witness in another the enjoyment of any advantage, worldly, or intellectual, or moral, which he himself cannot reach.

Every attentive reader of the Bible must remember to have found there very sad and painful illustrations of this truth. Did Cain rise up against his brother and slay him? What prompted this first murderer to his crime? *Envy!*—Envy of the excellence he would not imitate; of the piety which brought blessing from heaven upon Abel, and made that the Lord had respect unto his offering. Whence came long years of misery to the patriarch Jacob? Joseph, the son of his old age, was *envied* of his brethren! "His brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, and they *hated* him." So in many and various other instances, envy has been the fruitful source of evil: leading the dissatisfied heart of the proud to sin and misery. Well therefore may we all pray against envy; and seek divine strength to deliver us from a passion so mean, so degrading, so cruel, so subversive of whatever is peaceful, happy, and good.

pleasure in thinking how deeply you had wounded the feelings of him who was the object of your malice. But now that time has softened down your anger, and sickness has led you to think more of your own offences towards God, and less of the offences of a fellow-creature towards yourself, the case is marvellously altered. How gladly would you now recall your words of hatred! How gladly would you now forget, and persuade others also to forget, that cutting slander of your neighbour's fame, and those secret words of envy, smoother perhaps than oil, yet being very swords[1], in which your tongue once rejoiced! You are now sad in your turn. Your own heart is now pained, and wounded—the painful wound, inflicted by your own conscience. Yet you have found one to heal even that wound. "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow[2]." Let your penitence be proportionate to your offence. If that be deep, deep be your repentance. "The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin." The end of such repentance will be, as we have seen, peace and joy: *peace*, that you are again reconciled to your God: *joy*, that the weight of sin, its power, and its punishment, are cast from you. You can rejoice in the freedom wherewith Christ hath made you free.

Such being now your case—"Arise and go to thy Father," who is in heaven. To Him, open thine heart; rejoicing in his own assured declaration, that He "dwelleth in the heart of the contrite." Indeed, such is the overwhelming shame, which the penitent experiences, when, by the light of God's word and Spirit, he sees the dark character of sin, plunging him into a state of enmity with God and man and his own soul, that in the language of the prodigal

[1] Ps. lv. 22. Open enmity is bad. But worse is it, to cherish in the heart, malice—indulging the tongue in bitterness and guilt, and at the same time pretending good-will to the victim of its malice! No retrospect is more painful to the sick and dying penitent, than the recollection of having injured the good fame and peace of his neighbour.

[2] Isa. i. 18.

alone, can He find adequate expression for his feelings —"I will arise and go to my Father." But how is it, that we are permitted to expect, that the Being whom we have offended, will be reconciled? that He will welcome the banished home? Lo! He by whose name we are called, did teach his followers, ere He left them to their weighty trials, to view the Almighty as their Father. When his disciples were perplexed between the extent of their duty, and the weakness of their power to fulfil it, and ignorant how to frame those supplications to the throne of grace for aid, which they felt were indispensable, they turned to Him for counsel. Themselves unable to frame such a prayer as might be acceptable, they besought *Him*— "Teach us to pray[1]." The reply was immediate; and, to their surprise and joy, the address permitted them was to their "Father in heaven."

Reader, as you meditate upon these gracious and saving truths, rejoice that, truly penitent for past offences against God, your neighbour, and yourself, you have access to God through Jesus Christ[2], not as to an angry judge, but as a reconciled and merciful Father—a Father in *heaven*, who, "always more ready to hear than we to pray," heareth the prayer of the contrite, and despiseth not their desire; but meeteth his erring children as they return to Him, welcometh them again to their long-forsaken home, killeth the fatted calf, and biddeth each heart to make merry and be glad! Thou, his son, wert dead, and art alive!— Thou wert lost and art found; and once again happy in the love and favour of this thy heavenly *Father*, mayest now go on thy way rejoicing.

[1] The prayer which was graciously taught in reply to this request, will be separately considered in the two following chapters.

[2] 1 John i. 7. But "let none therefore sin, that grace may abound." "God forbid."

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### THE LORD'S PRAYER.

THE reader will remember, that in one of the many deeply interesting scenes with which the life of the Son of man abounds, his disciples, having watched Him as He poured out his heart in prayer, earnestly besought Him, that He would "teach them to pray[1]." Not that we are to suppose them ignorant of the duty of prayer; but desirous of being instructed in the most acceptable mode of performing that duty, they naturally looked for such instruction to one, who not only as their Lord and Master was ever ready to counsel and comfort them, but who Himself appeared to have derived from his devotion, strength for the work appointed Him, and consolation under the apprehension of those sorrows and afflictions which He knew awaited Him. They not unreasonably hoped, that He, who had found so successful a mode of supplication for Himself, would be the best counsellor for them. Hence it would be not with joy only that they heard themselves bidden to address the mighty Jehovah —the maker, preserver, and ruler of all—as their "*Father* in *heaven*:" wonder would mingle with their joy. Complete indeed, beyond the boldest heart to imagine, must be man's reconciliation with God, through the Saviour, ere he be permitted so near approach to the throne of grace as sonship would entitle him to.

Our Church seems impressed with the feelings of these disciples, and adopts their wise course; for though ready with her glorious collection of prayers, adapted to supplicants of every age and station—to

[1] Luke xi. 1.

their varied wants, and wishes, and fears, and hopes, —she ventures not to present her own words of supplication and thanksgiving, till first that prayer, which the Lord did teach, has been, with one voice, poured forth by the congregation—spiritualizing their minds, and, we humbly, but firmly hope, propitiating a reconciled God[1]. How instructive is the very opening of this prayer! God is our *Father*. The Christian is thus admitted to the privilege of angels. The lowliest among the sons of men, if he be a faithful member of Christ, may look to the Supreme, with all that sure reliance on his care, which children have in a parent's love, and with all that feeling of safety in which *they* may rejoice, who are under the protecting care of Omnipotence. Yet no vain glory mingles itself which this sense of privilege—no boasting of exclusive advantages. God is *our* Father—the Father of *all*, specially of the faithful of Christ Jesus. The monarch on his throne has no higher honour than their sonship; no surer defence than this divine protection; no more abiding consolation than the comfort of this holy presence! and his meanest subject who worships with him, shares that consolation, that defence, that honour; is partaker with him of his high privilege. What a bond of union is here formed! How are all the congregation, whether high or low, rich or poor, ruler or subject, parent or child, master or servant—how powerfully are they *all* severally encouraged so to fulfil the duties of their respective stations, that they may please their heavenly Father;

Our Father which art in heaven!

[1] The Church service formerly began with the Lord's Prayer. Now, however, the congregation, under a sense of the necessity and value of serious preparation, are led to the previous duty of confession. Penitent and pardoned, they may hope to be less unworthy of the glorious privilege of approaching their heavenly Father. And the previous part of the service we must feel and allow to be in the full spirit of the most deep and uncompromising humiliation. What a noble outpouring of a penitent and contrite heart is the Confession! See page 126.

gain his favour, and secure his love! Thus approaching his holy presence as children would approach the presence of a parent, it is but natural that we should pour forth, in the fulness of our heart, every sentiment of love, honour, and devotion—declaring our reverence, obedience, dependence upon his bounty, heavenly-mindedness, charity, humility, and lowliness; with a ready avowal, that to Him all honour is due.

Hallowed be thy name; thy Kingdom come; thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.

Indeed, our souls once raised to heaven, his dwelling-place, well may the angelic spirit of praise excite in us a holy joy in "*hallowing his name*,"—that name with which we associate all that is vast and holy and just and good—that name which is above every name: even *thy* name, O God! by whom all things were made, and by whom all things are preserved, and without whom man can do nothing; *thy* name, in whom we live and move and have our being. Surely that name should by all thy creatures be hallowed with praise, and glory, and honour, and power. But if we thus hallow the name of God, we must, as a reasonable consequence, allow that every command sanctioned by that name, should find a ready obedience from us. *His* laws should be written in our hearts: there his authority should be welcomed; there He should reign supreme—no rival power contending for the mastery: our wishes, our affections, our hopes, and our fears, all yielding to the influence of those laws. To this ready obedience we virtually pledge ourselves when we add the prayer—*Thy kingdom come!* For the kingdom of grace must first be established in our hearts, ere we can hope to share the kingdom of glory. We must first obey on earth the laws of our heavenly King, ere we can hope that our petition be granted to its full extent, and we be admitted at last to his kingdom in heaven. If then our souls look forward to the glories of God's *heavenly* kingdom, they must become conformed to the laws of his *spiritual* kingdom. Hence the fit

order of the following petition—as a condition that our hope of gaining the former may not be vain. We now pray that all the world may bear true allegiance to Him, their heavenly King; and *do his "will* in earth as it is in heaven." Not that man can so resist the will of God as to prevent its accomplishment. The guilt of resistance may be incurred, but its failure is sure. "As for *our* God, he is in heaven; he hath done whatsoever pleased him[1]!" and *his* will *must* be done. The object of the petition is that we may have grace always to *acquiesce* in *his* will; even when it be so done as to oppose our own. The petition, thus felt, and thus offered, is worthy an immortal soul, whose aspirations are for that blessed day, when the spirits of the just made perfect shall join the angel-choir in their unceasing services in heaven: services, let us remember, which will consist in doing the will of the Almighty. Blessed thought! Our service, then, even on earth, is as the service of heaven! Man shares the services of angels. How near the two worlds—the visible and the invisible! How near time and eternity! But patience must have her perfect work. Much must be done here in this lower world, before we can be admitted to the higher services above. Like the Apostles, indeed, in their hour of wonder at the glories of the spiritual world opened to them, when they attended their Lord during his transfiguration, we may exclaim—"it is good for us to be *here*;" in these contemplations we would fain abide—but the duties of this lower world again demand our care; and for strength to fulfil them we must look to our heavenly Father. "Give us 'therefore' this day our daily bread" —bread for the body—bread for the soul. True it is, man labours and toils in cultivating the ground: he goeth forth to his work till the evening—he late takes rest, and eats the bread

Give us this day our daily bread.

[1] Ps. cxv. 3.

of carefulness—and seed-time and harvest so regularly succeed each other, that the inhabitants of the world find food from year to year, and from age to age. But He, whose bountiful providence blesses the labour, and gives the seasons in their order, is too often as little remembered as if man were his own provider. The Giver is forgotten in the gift. Suppose the Almighty to withhold his sun and his rain; or so to time his gifts, that their influence would destroy instead of nourish, where would be the labour and industry of man? Not an ear of corn would spring up; and for lack of bread, man would perish. Does *God* thus give us food? wisely do we pray to Him for a continuance of the supply, and *that*, "day by day." "Give us *this* day our *daily* bread:" lest we be full and deny our God, and say, "Who is the Lord?" and fancy ourselves independent of our heavenly Father; and so, perhaps, in the midst of our plenty and fancied security, the awful voice of death summon us with—"Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee." Every day is, in fact, a new life. It is solely by God's providential care over us that we wake from the torpor of sleep. Surely He who thus daily gives life, is able and willing daily to give means of sustaining it. On Him, then, let us trust, each day, for food convenient for us; and take not any over-anxious heed for the morrow. If these reflections are applicable to the petition in question as it relates to the body, with what added power do they strike upon our heart, when we consider the petition as a prayer for *spiritual* food—for the bread of life? Does the body languish without its food? without its appointed daily food the soul too languishes and dies. When, therefore, we offer this supplication, let us remember that bread enough and to spare is free to all in the word and Spirit of Christ—and to the soul which feeds thereupon there is no fainting, no languishing, no death! but life, and health, and strength, and joy. Pray *daily* for this

bread, and daily shall you receive for *his* sake, who taught you thus to pray. But with all our own efforts, and all the aid which they receive from the strengthening and refreshing of that spiritual food—even the bread of life which the word and Spirit supply—we must confess ourselves sinful and *unworthy* in the sight of a holy God. Wherefore we are taught daily also to pray for pardon. Nor can the best of men, as he sums up, at evening close, the thoughts, words, and actions of the day, do other than confess that in God's sight he standeth *not* justified. Without pardon there can be no peace. "Forgive us our trespasses"—is then the soul's deep and earnest prayer. And now let us pause for a moment to admire the Divine wisdom, in so framing our petition for the greatest blessing which, as sinners, we can ask of our God, that we compel ourselves to the performance of the highest duty we can fulfil towards our neighbour, ere we can receive the blessing we ask for ourselves. Nay, we make the fulfilment of the duty a condition of the gift. We virtually throw away the blessing, even though God should grant it, if we do not fulfil the conditions of our own appointing. We pray to God that He would forgive us our trespasses; but we add both the *condition* and the *measure* of that forgiveness—"*as* we forgive" others. What a debt does society owe to the influence of this principle! How much of its peace and quiet may be traced to it! A ready forgiveness heals many a fresh wound, which would otherwise rankle and fester in the heart, both of the offender and the offended. The Apostle's illustration of evil thoughts in general, applies in full force to those of anger. They conceive sin, and bring forth ungodliness. Where there is a mind so Christianly noble as *at once* to forgive the offender, there is no time for sin to show itself. Whereas every angry man knows, that by brooding over an offence, he

Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us.

fancies it worse and worse, till in his inflamed imagination, an offence grows into a crime. Let him take heed, lest in venting his anger against a *fault* in his fellow-creature, he do not himself fall into a *sin* before his God; and if he love his own soul, let him not presume to pray for pardon for his sins, negligences, and ignorances, ere he has forgiven others, fully and freely, lest his prayers be by *himself* hindered.

It is true, that here arises no small difficulty. Even St. Paul felt that it was scarcely possible for us to be altogether clear either of giving or of taking offence. He guards his admonition—"If it be *possible*, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men [1]." How then are we to bear ourselves peaceably amid the continual trials to which we are exposed by those who, themselves of discontented and turbulent minds, "stir up strife all the day long?" It is certain, that we must not, like Peter, trust to our own strength or good resolutions, lest, like him, we fall from our stedfastness, and bring upon ourselves added misery. Our trust must be in the name of the Lord. We must be strong in the power of *his* might. Happy indeed if we be spared the trial—happier still if we be strengthened to endure it. Ours, therefore, be the humble, yet pious petition which follows—indicative of the most lowly dependence upon the good providence of God, and faith in his grace both to prevent and follow us. He is our helper and defender through whatever trials He may see fit to lead us. Whether our path of life be in sorrow or in joy, in trouble or in peace; He is our guide unto death. Yet the lowly heart, conscious of its own weakness and insufficiency, first prays to be spared the trial of its faith—"Lead us not into temptation"—lead us not into scenes and circumstances which may try our faith, and place obstacles in the fulfilment of our duty, either

Lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil;

[1] Rom. xii. 18.

towards Thee our God, towards our neighbour, or ourselves. Spare us that arduous struggle with our infirmities. But if it please Thee, in thine all-wise providence, that this petition be not answered—if trials compass us around; tempting us either to let go our faith, and weary of hope, and relax our obedience before Thee; or to yield to anger, or envy, or any uncharitableness towards our neighbour—then, O Father, forsake us not! Let thine Almighty "strength be perfected in our weakness [1]." If evil assault us, do Thou defend us! "Deliver us from evil [2]." And thy power controlleth *all* evil; whether the evil one —that prince of the powers of darkness, who is continually going about, seeking whom he may devour; tempting us by evil thoughts of pride and vanity, and discontent, and envy, and other bad passions: or evil men—who, being wicked themselves, have no higher gratification than tempting their fellow-creatures to share their sin, and so plunge them into a share of their misery: or the evil world, with its cares and its pleasures, successively enticing us from God, and lowering our thoughts from heaven to earth. If this petition be granted, then shall we patiently endure any trials which our heavenly Father may see fit to lay upon us; knowing that "God will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able; but will, with the temptation,"—or *trial*—"also make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it [3]." And if it be borne well and patiently, great is the reward. Should continual trials, however, almost wear out patience, do not fear, as though God had forgotten to be gracious, and not answered your prayer. If He has led you into trial, He is at hand to deliver

[1] 2 Cor. xii. 9.

[2] Either from "the evil one"—the prince of darkness, the devil: or from evil generally; of which he is the author and promoter—evil men; evil thoughts; evil of every kind.

[3] 1 Cor. x. 13.

you from the evil of it. He can change fear and doubt and dismay, into peace and hope and joy. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them who love him[1]."

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

Having thus summed up our *petitions*, we are directed to close the prayer with a *doxology*—a giving of thanks and glory to the Being whose favour we have been soliciting. The form of this doxology, when considered in reference to the petitions we have previously offered, is very striking. It is, in fact, an avowal of the supreme majesty of Jehovah; a confession that whether or no *we*, his creatures, are sincere in our supplication for grace to hallow his Name, and obey his laws, and depend upon his providence, and acknowledge his power, and receive his kingdom into our hearts, and live to his glory—his *is* the kingdom: *his* the power, and the glory, for ever and ever: our defection neither detracting from the splendour of his kingdom, nor weakening his power, nor diminishing his glory. For though it is true, that the righteous are said to live to God's honour, and the poorest and lowliest who lead godly lives, are encouraged by the assurance, that before men they are graciously considered by God as living to his glory, inasmuch as they show the power of his grace; letting their light so shine, that others seeing their good works, glorify their Father who is in heaven—yet God's glory is essentially the same; for ever and ever unchangeable: independent of any such accessary to its splendour, as the worship of the whole universe might supply.

To this truth each individual of the congregation gives assent with heart and voice, by the solemn—

[1] James i. 12.

"Amen!" "Even so, blessed Father! even so be it! My heart confesseth; my lips avow this truth. Thine *is* the kingdom—thine the power—*thine* the glory—for ever[1]."

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## CHAPTER XXIX.

### THE LORD'S PRAYER.

THIS great eternal Being is your Father. Heaven is his throne; earth his footstool: yet He is your "*very* present help in the needful time of trouble;" in this your season of sickness. He watches over you in nights of anguish and wakefulness. By his providence He sustains you, enabling you to bear the pain and wearisomeness of an afflicted body, and in David's affecting language, "making all your bed in your sickness." By his grace He heals the sickness of your soul also, and applies to it the healing doctrines of his Gospel. And when perhaps to this gracious God, in the extremity of exhaustion from pain and weakness, you were unable to proffer other devotional services, *this* prayer has arisen to your thoughts, and been uttered by your lips, to the sustaining of your patience, the strengthening of your faith, the removing of your fears, and the brightening of your hope. It is *this* prayer, with which our devotional services in

[1] Though, as I have already suggested—page 131—it is always desirable that in those parts of the service, where our Church directs the congregation to join with the voice, their responses be made *audibly*, the practice would seem especially beneficial, when we join in, or close, *this* prayer. Indeed, that the habit is too often disregarded is much to be lamented, for where it is observed, the devout worshipper is both delighted and strengthened in his duty. When a whole congregation, after repeating together the several petitions in the prayer, join in the solemn Amen, each heart finds the flame of devotion kindle into a brighter glow, and we serve our God on earth with a fervour and joy, exceeded only by the angel-choirs in heaven.

life *begin:* it is *this* with which they *close.* Who remembers not, that memory's *first* effort was to retain as its own this, the *Lord's* Prayer? You recollect when your mother, with a devotedness of patience which piety could alone supply, joined your infant hands, and directed your wondering eyes and opening thoughts upwards, as she taught you to lisp these words. And you have probably witnessed in your dying fellow-Christians, that their *last* faltering breath has whispered them in peace. Oh! let not the words in your case be mere sounds! let them not be a mere lip service! Let the heart also pour them forth, as you thus proceed with your own individual application of them.

"Is God my *Father?* where then is his honour? Do I reverence Him with filial love and obedience? Do men see in my conduct any token that I am a child of God?—Again: Is He *our* Father? Where is that charity which I owe to my fellow-creatures, as those who are blessed with like privileges, as well as bound by like obligations? do I heed my Divine Teacher's counsel, in reference to this our mutual relation to the Almighty—do I love them as brethren? This our Father is in *heaven!* If I believe that He heareth me even there, how searching must be his knowledge! He is present in heaven above; He is also present upon the earth beneath; or how could He hear us? We cannot yet ascend into heaven; thither no man approacheth: He therefore cometh down to his creatures, and heareth the prayers of the faithful. What a motive for holiness in thought, word, and deed! How dare I sin on earth, yet think to be heard in heaven?"

Having thus reflected upon the *address* with which you begin the Lord's Prayer, pursue your reflections upon the *petitions* by which the address is followed. "I have prayed that 'his Name may be hallowed.' With what care should I watch myself, lest I either take that great and holy Name in vain by evil speak-

ing, or hear it in vain, by disregarding the word which is armed with its authority, and sanctified by its holiness! I have prayed also that his kingdom may come. Does then my soul ardently long for the kingdom of grace so to be established in my heart now, that I may share the kingdom of glory hereafter? Having been enrolled as a soldier of Christ, do I faithfully and manfully fight under his banner the good fight of faith; earnestly contending for the extension of his spiritual and heavenly kingdom, and no longer, either by resistance to its authority, or lukewarmness in its honour, oppose its coming? I have also prayed, that his will may be done in earth, even as it is in heaven. Let me beware of mocking the Supreme! Has my heart really wished an answer to the words my lips have uttered? If so, why have I so often murmured at his dispensations, when afflictive towards me? Those dispensations were according to his will; and doubtless necessary to accomplish his will in me, even though my infirmity discerned not the necessity. Let me, for the future, check every murmur, by recalling to mind my prayer—that God's will be done, not my own. Let me stand to my words. Let me prove that I was sincere in offering the petition, by being submissive to whatever answer God may have sent to it; and let me gain a steady and even cheerful patience, by reassuring my fainting spirit, that not only is it *God's will*, but that his will is *our salvation;* and that all things which God wills to be done, shall work *together* for good to them that love Him[1]. Again; as I have continued the petitions,

[1] In recording this sentiment, I am forcibly reminded of a noble instance of the *practical* application of it, in the case of a great and good man, under sufferings of mind, body, and estate *.

The patient sufferer, after his recovery from a dreadful illness, observed, "I cannot expect that the first will be the last visit of this cruel complaint. But 'Shall we receive *good* at the hand of God, and

* The late Sir Walter Scott.

and prayed our heavenly Father to 'give us this day our daily bread,' have I been regardful of my *spiritual* wants as well as temporal necessities? Grateful for my own temporal mercies, as the free gift of my heavenly Father, have I been mindful of the wants of others, rendering what aid was in my power towards their alleviation? and when I remembered that my spiritual life required its appointed food—the word and Spirit of Christ—did I also remember that He, who is always more ready to hear than we to pray, had already provided it, fully and freely? Whatever may have hitherto been my neglect of this food for my soul, henceforth, with gratitude proportioned to the gift, will I receive the blessing, and feed thereon in my heart by faith with thanksgiving.—Do I pray to be *forgiven?* let me *grant* forgiveness; lest by withholding pardon from others, I cast away pardon from myself." Reader! are you of a revengeful spirit? Does your anger flame up, when a fellow-creature offends you? Do you long to wreak upon him your vengeance?—You are undone by your own act. For though your revenge may be restrained by a consideration of your station in life, or by your fears, or by your dread of its consequences in various ways; yet if you conceive it in *thought*, *that* is the sin before God. And suppose God, in answer to your petition, does to you as your heart would lead you to do to a

*not* receive *evil?*'" Whilst in reference to trials of a different nature, in the prospect of loss of property and worldly comforts, the same firmness, based upon religious principle, supported him in a noble submission, and even cheerful acquiescence, which no lower considerations could have supplied. When he had reason to fear a change from the ease of affluence to the trials of adversity, he checked every murmur, welcomed every trial, controlled every fear, in the spirit and the language of the Patriarch—"Naked we entered the world, and naked we leave it. *Blessed be the Name of the Lord.*" Thus did his great mind bear its willing and valuable testimony to the gracious power of the Divine word, as the fountain of strength and wisdom: confessing that, with all its contingent advantages, "the wisdom of the world is but foolishness with God." Religion alone is sure wisdom, even for the wise.

fellow-creature—would He pardon you? One hour you have, either in your closet, or in your family, or in the congregation, offered up this petition, and in another hour even murderous thoughts may have swelled your angry heart. Earnestly pray God, the thought of your heart be forgiven you! Remember the condition you annex to your prayer; and forget not, that *as* you forgive others those trespasses against you, which can affect you only for the short space of a passing life, *so* you gain or lose pardon for sins which, if unforgiven, will surely plunge you into misery for ever. You lastly pray that God would lead you not into temptation, but deliver you from evil. Take heed yourself to avoid that temptation, from which you pray to be delivered. Do not yield to evil habits, evil affections, evil tempers; lest, by so doing, you encourage the evil one to tempt you. If you really hate all evil ways, then, depend upon it, God will deliver you from them: "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." God's strength, in the fulness of his mercy, and the free exercise of his power, will be perfected in your weakness—and you will be more than conqueror through Jesus Christ, your Teacher, your Saviour, your God.

Such, my reader, are some of the reflections which naturally suggest themselves upon a serious consideration of the Lord's Prayer. I have stated them the more fully, not only because the prayer itself, being from infancy to the end of life, part of our appointed daily service to the Almighty, cannot be too well understood; but because the hour is coming to us all—the hour of death—when our failing powers may yet retain it in memory, and we shall flee to it as our refuge. Blessed will they be who in that hour can offer it in sincerity and in truth, and in all the fulness of faith. God grant that *you* may then so offer it! The voice, indeed, as vital strength gives way, may be powerless, the lips may deny their office, and no *word* of prayer find utterance; but the heart shall yet pour

forth the cherished thoughts of well-founded confidence, and holy praise, and filial reverence to your Father in heaven. His Name you have hallowed; to his authority you have bowed yourself; his will you have striven to do on earth with the communion of saints, even as you hope to do it in heaven with the angels; his forgiveness, the subject of your daily petition and your daily hope, you trust to have gained even as you from your heart have forgiven others [1]. And thus your dying petitions will close. You will henceforth have no temptations to fear, no evil of this world to be delivered from. The next will be opening upon you; and there, as the wicked cease from troubling, so will the weary be at rest. Rest and glory shall then be the portion of the righteous for ever [2]. When that hour shall come to thee, may this prayer be in thine heart, to sustain and comfort thee! May it pass thee to thy bliss in heaven!

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## CHAPTER XXX.

### THE LITURGY—ITS EMINENTLY SPIRITUAL CHARACTER.

THOUGH in the former chapters I have not forborne to enter largely into an explanation of the Lord's Prayer,

[1] I can imagine no moment on this side of the eternal world of woe, more dreadful, than that in which a dying man remembers the *unrepented* sin of *revenge*—of revenge, whether in act, in wish, or in thought. To feel, as he draws near the presence of the eternal Judge, in hope of *pardon*—for who would dwell with everlasting burnings? Isa. xxxiii. 13, 14.—to feel, that he *so* approaches, not having fulfilled the very conditions which he annexed to his petition for forgiveness to himself; to be conscious that inasmuch as he has *not* forgiven his fellow-creatures, he has virtually cast from himself the forgiveness which now at the last hour he prays for; to feel and be conscious of all this, when time is past recall, and eternity at hand—what is it but to anticipate at once the woe and remorse of Dives? no alleviation of a misery which the conscious sufferer himself pronounces just.

[2] Matt. xxv. 46.

with which in fact the supplicatory part of our Liturgy may be considered as beginning, it is *not* my present purpose to proceed with an equally full explanation with respect to the Liturgy itself. It will be enough, in this season of serious thought, to fix your mind upon some of its excellences; especially upon its wonderful harmony with the word of God: proclaiming the doctrines of the Gospel in all their purity; expanding its instructive precepts with a clearness and force equally beautiful and striking; teaching a wise application of its hopes and fears, its threats and promises, not less practical than spiritual; and interweaving throughout its services, whether of penitence, or supplication, or thanksgiving, that twofold object which angels proclaimed as the aim of the coming Messiah, and to establish which the word itself directs all its power—"*Glory* to *God*, and *good will* toward *men*[1]." That object is kept in view by our Church with a steadiness of purpose, and a fervour of piety, which is unfelt only by those whose heart is not in their duty, and who join in the public service merely for form's sake. Where men worship in spirit and in truth, it is impossible to use our noble Church services without a depth of devotional feeling, and a spirituality of thought towards *God*, which, as they well befit a creature bowed low before the footstool of the Creator, we may humbly hope will not be unaccepted, for Christ's sake, by *Him* to whose honour they are consecrated, and on whose divine word they are founded: whilst towards *men* they foster "peace and good will;" engendering that charity, which believeth all things, endureth all things, hopeth all things—that heaven-born charity, which never faileth. In fact, the word of God finds in the Liturgy a commentary so plain and instructive, that the more heartily we join in its services, the more we shall prize them, and the nearer we may hope to attain to that excellence which the

[1] Luke ii. 14.

one enjoins, and to the attaining which the other lends its aid.

Fully, however, as *all* the doctrines of the Gospel are declared in our Liturgy, and powerfully as the application of them all is there enforced, none are insisted upon more strongly, or display themselves more clearly, than the doctrine of sanctification by grace. It at once leads us to the Spirit of God, as the spring of whatever is holy in thought, or good in deed; as the only fountain whence can flow whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are of good report; and whence alone the stream of goodness can be supplied. Whether the supplication be on behalf of nations or individuals, of sovereigns or their subjects, of believers or unbelievers—one sentiment prevails—an entire dependence upon the grace of God. And to this particular excellence of our Liturgy I would now direct your attention, because it would seem specially a subject adapted to your present tone of feeling; when your mind, having ample time for serious meditation, is more and more conscious of its own weaknesses and infirmities, and gratefully lays hold of the means set before it, of strengthening those weaknesses, and healing those infirmities by the power and efficacy of the Holy Spirit of God.

Let us illustrate our position, by adducing a few instances where this harmony is more strikingly observable.

We have already noticed it in the *exhortation*, the *confession*, and the *absolution*[1]. Does the minister *exhort* the congregation to accompany him to the throne of grace? The purport is distinctly stated—that they may *thence* gain "those things which be necessary as well for the body as the *soul*." *The soul* boasts no power, no strength, no other means of sustaining what power and strength may be given,

[1] See pages 120—136.

than may be supplied by the grace of God. So in the *confession*, the penitent is led at once to avow—an avowal mortifying to human pride, yet well becoming human weakness—that "there is no" spiritual "health in him;" by nature, no health of soul—no purity of intention, no soundness of principle, no strength of holiness. All those blessings, if we would have them, must be received as the free gift of the grace of God, for his mercy's sake in Christ Jesus. And when the Church declares that God pardoneth and *absolveth* the truly penitent—minister and people unite in beseeching God to grant them not only true repentance, but "*his Holy Spirit;*" that *so* life may henceforth be passed to the welfare of their souls, and the honour of their God. On *that* Holy Spirit alone they rely for pleasing their heavenly Father, even in the present hour of solemn devotion. On *that* they repose their hope, that "the rest of their life hereafter may be pure and holy." Language cannot be stronger in avowing faith in the doctrine of Grace; nor can it be in more entire harmony with the word of inspiration, which declares emphatically that "it is God which worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure [1]." We have no power of ourselves to help ourselves: "our sufficiency is of God [2]."

This doctrine of spiritual grace as the fountain of spiritual life, is so interwoven by our Church into her services, that whilst she teaches us to consider the Holy Spirit as the source of our sanctification before God, she directs us to refer to his guidance and wisdom for the regulation of our conduct before men. If grace be required as the means of so sustaining the soul against evil, that "we fall into no sin, neither run into any kind of danger," its preventing aid is declared equally needful in "*all* our doings," that they may "be ordered by *God's* governance;" and that we be enabled to "do *always* that which is righteous in

[1] Phil. ii. 13 [2] 2 Cor. iii. 5.

his sight, through Jesus Christ our Lord"—that in *all* our ways, from the high and holy duties which lie more immediately between God and our souls, to those apparently inferior, yet closely connected duties which we owe to our neighbours and ourselves, we should consider the same Divine guidance necessary[1]. Thus, as she brings her worshippers to the throne of grace, she prepares them *all* by the deepest humility. In her assemblies, rich and poor meet together; having one common fountain of heavenly wisdom, even the Spirit of Him who is the maker of them all. Where is self-sufficiency? Where the pride of riches, learning, or station? The highest intellect, the deepest learning, the most exalted station, the most ample wealth, find no power of themselves to help themselves: their sufficiency is of God. So the poorest, the lowliest, the most unlettered, can no longer excuse an unholy life by pleading their ignorances, their poverty, or whatever other disadvantages may attach to their several stations. *That*, which maketh truly wise, is fully theirs. The Spirit of holiness, wisdom, and peace, is free to them also in Jesus Christ their Lord. As *without* Him *none* are wise, or strong unto salvation, so *by* Him strength cometh to the weakest. Thus is the Saviour exalted, and the Spirit of grace magnified. Can the deepest piety conceive a feeling more in harmony with the humbling doctrines of the Gospel? Can the deepest conviction of sin and unworthiness require more than this in proof of devotedness to the cross of Christ? Till the season of sickness gave you time and opportunity to reflect, you perhaps never fairly measured this doctrine as declared in our Church service, by the Gospel itself. If so, you never could have partaken to the full, of that peace and consolation which they are so admirably calculated to afford, when the worshipper shares in them with all his heart, and with all his mind—a peace

[1] The Collect in the Morning Service; "for Grace."

and consolation which, I trust, will henceforth be your own.

As in all cases, the more exalted be the station in life, the heavier is the responsibility attached to its duties; and as in proportion to the weight of responsibility, is the strength required to sustain it; so we are taught to consider the aid of Divine strength as specially required by those whom Providence may have been pleased to set in the high places of the earth,—by "kings, and all in authority under them;" that they may live in the fear of God, and to the praise of his holy Name; remembering the strict and solemn account they must themselves one day give before his great tribunal.

Do we pray for the king?—with what fulness of purpose is our prayer poured forth! How deep the piety, how fervent the devotion, how ardent the zeal for his welfare, with which it is framed! and the object of our prayer is, that God would "replenish him with the grace of his *Holy Spirit*"—filling his every thought, directing his words, and guiding his actions, in all the safety of godly counsel and heavenly wisdom: whilst we further supplicate that, considering all other sources of help, wisdom, and riches, as nothing compared with grace, he may thereby be enabled "alway to incline to *God's* will, and walk in *God's* way;" may so triumph alike in public and in private life over the several ills which assail him, that "finally he may attain everlasting joy and felicity:" resting our plea upon the infinite power, the unbounded love, and the wise superintending providence of the great Jehovah, to whose care, temporally and spiritually, we commend the sovereign He has set over us. We appeal to his love as a Father—to his majesty as King of kings and Ruler of princes—to his omniscience as the great moral Governor of the universe, who is supreme equally over kings and their subjects. How powerfully is the

O Lord, our heavenly Father, high and mighty, King of kings, Lord of lords, the only Ruler of princes, who

dost from thy throne behold all the dwellers upon earth, most heartily we beseech Thee with thy favour to behold our most gracious Sovereign.

spirit of loyalty here excited! how gloriously is it sanctified! a spirit which breathes in every part of our admirable Liturgy! a spirit, upon which every page of the sacred writings, which has reference to this world's ordering, strongly and uniformly insists! And if the prayer be offered in sincerity, we dare not doubt of blessing. My Christian reader, whether thou be of the great and mighty ones of the earth, or thy lot be cast among the lowliest of the sons of men—who knoweth but that even *thy* voice may call down blessing? that at thine earnest supplication the Almighty may turn and leave a blessing behind Him; and so answer thy prayer for grace, that the sovereign —"knowing whose minister he is," may "above all things seek God's honour and glory;" and "study to preserve the people committed to his charge in wealth, peace, and godliness;" whilst "we and all his subjects, duly considering whose authority he hath, may faithfully serve, honour, and humbly obey him, in *God*, and *for* God, according to his blessed word and ordinance, through Jesus Christ!"

Surely a nation, if all were influenced by the Spirit of the Most High—from the king on his throne, to the lowliest subject in the realm—might humbly hope to be exalted in righteousness [1].

[1] If those holy and happy thoughts are at all times natural to the mind, when we contemplate the relation in which a Christian people stand to a Christian monarch, they would seem, irresistibly, to fill the heart with still holier and happier reflections *now* *. It has pleased Divine Providence to set upon the throne of these realms a youthful and a female sovereign. If the perils of so exalted a station be always great—if the experienced find it no easy task so to steer amid the intricacies of such a course, that they *safely* "pass the waves of this troublesome world"—those perils are not lessened, those difficulties are not diminished, when youth, in the very confidence of unsuspecting ingenuousness, is exposed to the one, and surrounded by the other. Blessed thought, then, that there *is* a *strength*, which is perfected in weakness! that there is a wisdom from above, which maketh the

* June, 1839.

But it is not only in his royal office that our Church directs her sons to pray for the sovereign set over them. Affection for the individual is to blend with reverence for the office. The sovereign is open to all the cares, and free to all the charities of social life, even as the subject. Ours, therefore, is the duty of praying for blessing on those near and dear to him in life—that the Divine favour may rest on *all* the royal family [1]. Mark now the source whence, here also, we look to gain the blessing for which we pray! All wisdom, such as human learning would supply, we may well suppose them to have at their command; for they would doubtless surround themselves with the

Almighty God, the fountain of all goodness, we humbly beseech thee to bless the Prince Albert, Albert, Prince of Wales,

heart of the simple wise, even unto salvation! O most wise, and holy, and mighty God! when these prayers of thy Church are offered—thy people, rich and poor, old and young, high and low, with one accord making common supplication—O grant that, being uttered from the heart, from the very depth of loyal Christian hearts, they may be heard and answered from heaven thy dwelling-place! So may our youthful Queen be blessed in her people here, and in her God for ever!

[1] Ezra vi. 10. It is at all times gratifying we hope to a Christian people to pour forth prayers for blessing on those whom God hath placed over them, to bear rule: and hard indeed must be the heart, which does not soften, as it is thus called to feel their wants and wishes, to sympathize with their sorrows as liable to the ills of humanity, and to share their joys as the redeemed of the Lord. But even this duty may have a higher claim upon our regards, and be heeded with a deeper devotion, according as circumstances of increased interest call for its performance. Of the thousands and tens of thousands who offer this prayer, few, methinks, whilst they pray for *all* the royal family, fail to picture to themselves as an object of their special reverential regard and gratitude, Adelaide, the widow queen; who, noble as was her bearing when she shared a throne, still moves, though in another sphere, an example of all the excellences which can adorn Christian character. Nor can this nation ever forget its debt of gratitude to her, so long as it remembers her the unwearied tender nurse of our late monarch, through a sad and wearying sickness, even to the awful hour of death *.

* Since the above note was written in 1839, the good Queen Adelaide, to whom it refers, has passed to her rest, and has found a brighter throne, we trust, than even that which she shared on earth. But the note is retained, as a grateful tribute to her honoured memory.

and all the Royal Family. Endue them with thy Holy Spirit, enrich them with thy heavenly grace, prosper them with all happiness, and bring them to thine everlasting kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

truly wise as well as the truly good. Wealth also, ample to meet the grandeur of their station, they would have without toil or anxiety; and of such happiness as this world can give, they may be supposed to have full measure. Therefore, *not* for such good things on their behalf do we supplicate. In the devotional feeling with which the Gospel imbues us, we rather pray that God would endue them with his Holy Spirit—so shall they have true wisdom: that He would enrich them with his heavenly grace—so shall they have treasures in heaven: that He would prosper them with *all* happiness—with that spiritual happiness, which shall gild their path with peace in this life, and with everlasting glory in that which is to come.

Thus the Spirit of God is duly honoured, as the author and giver of life—the fountain of good to all people—the only sanctifier, guide, and comforter, not of the poor and needy only, but of the rich and the powerful. *All* are God's creatures; preserved by his care; redeemed by his love; sanctified by his grace.

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## CHAPTER XXXI.

### PRAYER FOR THE CLERGY AND PEOPLE.

Since kings and their subjects, when viewed as to their eternal concerns, are all one family, the family of God; having one common interest as his children in Christ Jesus, and so heirs of his kingdom—our Church offers a common prayer for blessing alike upon those to whom more especially as stewards of the manifold grace of God, those interests are entrusted, and those for whose sake the trust is so re-

posed. Observe, however, the full reliance which she places upon the Spirit of God, to convey the blessing for which she prays. Observe, too, the reverence with which she approaches the throne of grace, when supplicating for so great a boon, as power in her clergy to preach the word, and a disposition of meekness in the people so to receive it, that it may win souls to Christ. The appeal is to *Omnipotence*—to the God who doeth wonders; that in the exercise of that wondrous power, He will Himself effect so stupendous a work, as the salvation of souls by the appointed ministry of his word. Nor is there to a contemplative mind an object of greater wonder, than the evident influence of the word of God, when dispensed by the hand of man[1]. Well may the supplicant Church approach its heavenly Father, as a Being who "*worketh great marvels.*" Was it his marvellous work that the spirit brooded upon the face of the waters, reducing to order and harmony the rude and conflicting elements which now form the natural world? Is it a less marvellous work to brood upon the stormy elements of the moral world—even the wills and passions of sinful man—bring them into their beautiful order of holiness, and by controlling their conflicting agencies, direct them to God's glory and man's salvation? None but a minister of the word can fully feel the necessity for "that healthful Spirit of grace" here prayed for, to

Almighty and everlasting God, who alone workest great marvels; Send down upon our Bishops and Curates, and all congregations committed to their charge, the healthful Spirit of thy grace; and that they may truly please Thee, pour upon them the continual dew of thy blessing. Grant this, O Lord, for the honour of our Advocate and Mediator, Jesus Christ. Amen.

[1] By the term "curates" here, is to be understood all to whom is committed the *cure* or *care* of souls—whether "Bishops, Priests, or Deacons."

Thus our blessed Lord, for the encouragement of his Church for ever, chose that when He miraculously fed the thousands, the food should be *distributed* by the hands of his disciples. The blessing the same, though dispensed by the intervening agency of man.

assist his humble endeavours in the arduous work appointed him. He may be watchful in his office, faithful, diligent; he may be bold to rebuke vice, and zealous to excite the indifferent to action; he may lack no fortitude in enduring the taunts of the scornful, the sneers of the envious, the frowns of the malicious and cruel man; he may be quick and patient to enlighten the ignorant, strong to combat the unbeliever, wise to confute the sophist, apt to expose the caviller; but where is the fountain whence flows this wisdom? where the spring that supplies this courage, this patience, this endurance? Where but in the "healthful spirit of God's grace!" So with those for whom he exercises his ministry. Are they, in obedience to the Gospel preached, to control their self-will, correct and regulate their tempers, curb their passions, soften the heart of stone till it become a heart of flesh? Are they "to live to the glory of God," and by identifying their own cause with his, elevate themselves alike above the wants and the calamities of the world? How is all this to be done, unless the God, "who alone worketh great marvels," pours upon them the "continual dew of his blessing?" If the blessing be vouchsafed, then indeed it is no presumptuous hope that the seed of the word, sown in the heart by the agency of man, may yet spring up, and bring forth fruit unto holiness, the end whereof may be life eternal, through Jesus Christ.

Thus humbly does the Church repose her *full* trust and confidence upon the powers of the *Spirit* to prosper the work of her hand upon her; gladly confessing that, if at the great harvest of the world her spiritual field give good increase, the praise will be not of man, but of God!

I have the rather drawn your attention to this more striking characteristic of our Liturgy, because you will the better appreciate, I hope, the value of its daily services in aiding you to sustain and exercise that spiritual life, the life of the soul, which, now that

bodily sickness has taught the comparative vanity of a mere earthly existence, you find to be the "one thing needful," deserving all your care and watchfulness.

But when this season of sickness shall have passed, and you again mingle in the busy world, you will find it difficult perhaps to retain the same fixedness of faith in your Redeemer, and trust in his Spirit, which at present you rejoice in. The holy, the happy calm of a spiritual life, which you now feel—how often will it be interrupted by the varied and daily trials of active life! You will require, therefore, not only day by day, "daily bread:" the word and Spirit of God; you will need also some occasional help of a special nature; such as shall so vividly set before you *Him* who is Himself your life—even Christ Jesus, the Lord of life—that his image, stamped upon your heart, shall ever there retain its place; that whatever else may either demand your care, or win your regard, or attach your affections, *He* may still reign there, Supreme. To keep alive in your soul *this* remembrance of Him, He did "institute and ordain holy mysteries—as pledges of his love, and for a *continual* remembrance of his death, to your great and endless comfort." Our Church, therefore, at the holy communion of his body and blood, sets before us the very emblems, by which He Himself chose that his precious sacrifice should be represented: and so forcibly and affectingly does that representation strike upon the heart of the humble communicant, that as to share it without benefit, so to neglect it without harm to the soul, were alike impossible.

Let me now therefore direct your attention to that solemn part of Christian duty—attendance at the holy table of the Lord.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

### THE HOLY SACRAMENT.

"GREAT peace have they who love God's law."—Surely, henceforth "all the day long shall be my study in it[1]."

Such methinks is the heartfelt resolve of one, who, withdrawn by a season of sickness from a worldly course, and having in holy communing "tasted how gracious the Lord is[2]," resolves to lead a new life; to have a lively faith in God's mercy through Christ, and be in perfect charity with all men.—Such, haply, are now *your* reflections, O my reader! Such your resolves! But let no follower of Christ trust to his own resolution to keep stedfast; lest, like the zealous Peter, he lean upon a reed which will break under him; and great and grievous be his fall. I hope you will seek the appointed means of sanctifying your holy reflections, and strengthening your pious resolutions, by being a partaker of the holy communion of the body and blood of Christ; "thereby strengthening and refreshing the soul, even as the body is strengthened and refreshed by the bread and wine." And as you partake of that appointed outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace, may the God of all comfort be with you, and bless you in your deed! May He prosper the work of your hand upon you! Spiritually eating that bread which came down from heaven, and spiritually drinking of that blood which was shed upon the cross by Him who has ascended up to heaven, may you be so strengthened with might in the inner man, that every holy thought sanctified, every pious aspiration sustained, every good resolution confirmed, living to God spiritually here in

[1] Ps. cxix. 97.

[2] Ps. xxxiv. 8.

peace, you may live with Him hereafter eternally in glory.

It may, however, happen that you have either long neglected this duty, and feel shame in renewing it; or even have *never* known the comfort of being a partaker at the table of the Lord. A few observations may therefore not be altogether useless, as to the nature of the duty—its institution, its importance, its privileges.

Indeed, to feel that the duty is at once holy and imperative, we have only to bear in mind the institution of the Holy Sacrament. The scene opened to us upon that occasion is one, on which time, and place, and circumstance combine to stamp a more than wonted interest—a scene, which, however the glare and confusion of earthly things may sometimes put it aside, and remove it from our thoughts, can never be contemplated without mingled feelings of admiration and awe, of love and thankfulness.

The Son of God, being about to *finish* the work appointed to Him of his Father[1], by dying for the sins of mankind, earnestly desired that the sacrifice of his life should never be forgotten of those, for whose sake He voluntarily offered it; yet, knowing all things, even all the intricacies of the human mind, and all the weaknesses of the human heart, He foresaw that unless some motive of more than ordinary force were supplied to men, as the spring of obedience, the memory of his death, and the benefits of it would be alike disregarded and forgotten. The pride of intellect would soon obliterate any feeling of its necessity on the one hand, and a spirit of worldliness would soon lose any recollection of an act, the full and chief benefit of which was distant. Hence He not only appointed an outward and visible sign of that inward and spiritual grace which the Holy Sacrament offers to his followers, but He superadded a motive for partaking

[1] John xix. 30.

it, which of all motives might reasonably be expected to prove most powerful—even *gratitude*. "*This* do —in *remembrance* of me." And at what moment was this appeal made to one of the noblest feelings of the soul? even when death was about to divide the family —to separate Master, and servant, disciple and Lord. "*This* do—in remembrance of *me*—of me, *about to die* for you." Now think with what force this appeal *ought* to come! Think, and reason thus with yourself—"I feel that my soul is immortal, and that whether I shall be for ever happy, or for ever miserable, depends upon Jesus Christ, the crucified Son of God. He died for me; that, through his death, I might live eternally. Surely, if a friend, a dying friend, a friend dying to save me from death, were at his last hour to make any request to me, I feel it would be impossible not to comply with it. I could never resist the last wish of so dear, so inestimable a friend[1]."—Apply this to the case in point. Christ died for you, a sinner. Suppose therefore there were no other ground of obedience to his command to partake of the Holy Sacrament of his body and blood, than gratitude; *that*, methinks, were motive strong enough to move the hardest heart, and bend to obedience the most stubborn. *Who so base as to be ungrateful?* Add to this motive, the various other considerations which might weigh in pressing upon us obedience to this command of the dying Saviour, and it must be always

[1] Whilst "scarcely for a righteous man," as St. Paul argues, "will one dare to die"—"*Christ* died for the *ungodly* *." The Apostle's argument derives much additional force from the consideration, that in addressing the Romans, he addressed a people whose history was marked by memorable instances of self-devotion among their men of renown—patriots, who had given their lives for their country, and whose memory was justly cherished, and held in honour through successive generations by their countrymen. To them therefore the appeal to the principle of gratitude towards a dying benefactor would come with added power, and meet a readier welcome.

* Rom. v. 6, 7.

a matter of mingled astonishment and pain to the humble Christian, that the ordinance of the Lord's Supper is so often neglected, if not despised.

But the Holy Sacrament of the body and blood of Christ is not merely a commemorative rite; it is a seal of the Christian covenant, and an efficacious means of grace and salvation; appealing, therefore, not to feeling alone, but to principle—not only to the hearts of the simple, but to the understanding of the wise. Reason and faith combine to enforce the observance of it. For *who* enjoins it?—even the great Being, whom to obey is life; to disobey death! *He* commands, who is all-merciful, to will what is for our benefit; all-wise, to design what shall accomplish his will; all-powerful, to reward obedience, or punish disobedience. Surely, then, even the wise of this world must allow that what He commands us to do, it must be equally our interest and our duty to do; for when the servant is negligent of the known will of his master, reason itself awards punishment. Or shall the servants of Christ be measured by another standard of right and wrong? Shall they either be safe in their disobedience, or unrequited in their faithfulness? Rather let us be assured that attendance at the holy table is a duty, which no one who professes to be a Christian can consistently or safely neglect [1]. Whoso would be hailed with the welcome—"Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord,"—must first prove himself the "good and *faithful* servant," for whom that welcome is reserved.

The ground on which many pretend to justify their disregard of this duty, varies with every shade of character, and every difference of age, and station, and circumstance. Before, however, we proceed to

[1] The observations in chap. xxiii., upon the causes which may lawfully prevent our attendance upon public worship on the Sabbath, are equally applicable to the occasions which may prevent our attendance at the Lord's Table. To that chapter, therefore, I would refer the reader.

consider at large the excuses of the negligent, it may be well, in order to strengthen your own happy resolve henceforth to be a humble communicant, to state the *necessity*, which lies upon every hopeful believer, to fulfil the duty in question, viewing it as an appointed means of grace, which, in its institution and nature, is in striking harmony with the general character of all the Divine dispensations. The thoughts of God are not as our thoughts; neither his ways as our ways; but He works his own mighty will, and effects his own gracious purpose often by means which, according to unassisted reason, would rather bear the stamp of weakness than of power: almost of mockery, rather than of mercy.

You are doubtless conversant with the history of God's dealings towards his ancient Church, the people of Israel; and you remember that among the many wonderful circumstances connected with that history, is the institution of their Passover [1]. The members of Christ are *now* the Church of God—*they* are now his Israel; and what the Passover was to his Church of old, the Supper of the Lord is to his Church now. With the Apostle we rejoice, that "*Christ our Passover* is sacrificed for us [2]."

Now suppose the Israelites, when God appointed the Passover as a token of salvation to as many of them as should observe the ordinance, to have questioned the necessity or the propriety of the institution, and disregarded it. Suppose them to have put in the plea —that *they* "could see no reasonableness in believing that means so simple could possibly accomplish an end so vast as preservation of life. How could so simple an act guard them and their houses from the sword of the destroying angel? Besides, if God chose to deliver his elect people, his power was confessedly

[1] Exod. xii. 27. "It is the sacrifice of the Lord's *passover*, who *passed over* the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses."

[2] 1 Cor. v. 7.

infinite; sufficient therefore to deliver them without man's agency. Why should man share the work of salvation?"—Had God's people of old *thus* reasoned, as his Israel they might have boasted themselves his chosen, his elect: but saved they would not have been. The destroying angel recognized only the *token* of obedience: *That* was to make their calling and election sure. Where the blood was sprinkled, there he passed over; where the token was wanting, there he smote with death[1]. And shall the sceptic of the present day urge a similar plea for his disregard of "Christ *our* Passover;" and urge it successfully? Shall he, in the pride of his intellect, scoff the simplicity of the means, and therefore cast them from him? or shall he taunt the believer, and in the infatuation of a wicked heart, pretend that man should have a fuller trust in the free grace of God, than to use means? How blind such wise ones! Surely Israel in Egypt were saved equally by grace, though obedience on their part was required to adopt the means by grace enjoined. So surely also, my Christian reader, are we now saved equally by the free grace of God, even though with all our heart, and with all our mind, we obey his commandments, and do his bidding, and keep his laws; remembering his own emphatic warning—"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that *doeth* the *will* of my Father which is in heaven."

The same reasoning applies in the case of Naaman—a case the more strongly illustrative of our argument, as we find the Divine mercy conveyed by appointed means, and by the word of a prophet, to a *heathen*

[1] Exod. xii. 23. The passage is not less remarkable than instructive and monitory. "For the Lord will pass through to smite the Egyptians: and when he *seeth* the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side-posts, the Lord will *pass over* the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you."

Happy believer! on whose heart and conduct is *seen* sprinkled the blood of the Crucified, its evidence being a holy and religious life!

sufferer. The history is of course familiar to you. Naaman had led with great success the armies of the king of Syria. He is portrayed as "a great man with his master, and honourable; because by him the Lord had given deliverance unto Syria: he was also a mighty man in valour—but he was a leper[1]." For this sad disease the skill of man could find no remedy. It happened, however, that in one of their incursions into the territory of the Israelites, the Syrians under this captain had taken captive "a little maid of Israel,

[1] If we look carefully into human life, how invariably shall we find that in its happiest state, as far as this world's advantages can afford happiness, there is always some drawback to man's felicity; some alloy to his comfort. Naaman's history presents an affecting illustration of this truth. He was a warrior, deservedly held in honour by his king and by his country; even "a great man with his master." He was more; for it is clearly implied that he *deserved* this greatness—"he was a great man with his master, and *honourable*." The term indicating that the moral worth of his character gave a lustre even to the splendour of his high station: whilst in private life, the affection that his servants and dependents bore him, give testimony to his kind and amiable bearing; for even the captive maid of Israel so felt for his affliction that she scrupled not boldly to suggest the means of its alleviation. High then in public honour and rich in private esteem, Naaman was, to a superficial observer, an object of envy. What lacked he? "O that I had his wealth!" exclaims the poor man. "O that I had a share of his honours!" whispers the ambitious. "Give me a part of his power," says the disappointed. Let these envious ones look closer to the portraiture. Naaman *was* a mighty man of valour; he *was* high and honourable; he *was* loved of his king, his country, and his family; he was thus eminently and deservedly a man of renown—*but* he was a *leper!*

Do you envy him *now?* would you, who are poor, exchange your poverty, with health, and strength, to be rich—but a leper? would you, whose ambitious spirit is kept down by adversity and disappointment, but who are blessed with health of body and of mind, and competency perhaps: say, would you be a successful aspirant after fame—but a leper? Envy not thy neighbour. In human life, lights and shadows, joys and sorrows, however they may be modified, ever go together. Man is born to trouble. He may indeed have many alleviations to it, in the blessings which by Divine mercy are mingled with his trials; for these he cannot be too grateful. *But*, some drawback to felicity the happiest of the sons of men *must* have: and to *that*, in whatever form it come, let us be resigned. It is the Christian's cross. Let us take it up readily; and so follow Christ.

The whole of the chapter, 2 Kings v., is full of instruction; and of deep and affecting interest.

who waited upon Naaman's wife." She, with every thought carried back to her own land, mindful more especially of the miraculous power vested in the prophets of her nation, and prompt to speak aught which might in some degree turn the conqueror's view favourably towards the vanquished, declared her firm conviction that Elisha, the prophet of the Lord, could heal the leper. "Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would heal him of his leprosy." Naaman, with a natural eagerness to adopt any measure which promised relief, applied to the prophet, pursued the course enjoined him, "and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean." Now is it not clear, that if he had disregarded the remedy, he had failed of the benefit? Yet what was that remedy? what were those means by which the prophet proposed to heal this leprosy? "Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean." To mere human apprehension, there could be no virtue in such a remedy as this. Reason could allow no force to the mode prescribed. Indeed, the whole proceeding of the prophet appeared so unreasonable and strange, that Naaman "turned and went away in a rage." He argued justly, as far as *human* power was to effect his recovery, that if *any* stream of water could render him clean, the far-famed Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, had better been appointed for that purpose. But God often by the simple confounds the wise. The zealous servants of Naaman—their zeal quickened by their affectionate compassion—took up a different ground of argument: "My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then when he saith unto thee, Wash and be clean?" The master could no longer either disregard the ready zeal of his servants, or check his own secret desire to try any remedy proposed, however its simplicity might wound his pride. "*Then* went he down and dipped himself

seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God; and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child; and he was clean."

Shall Naaman be prevailed upon to have faith in the prophet Elisha, and will you not have faith in the Lord of that prophet? Shall Jesus Christ bid you wash in the fountain of his blood, and will you turn away? Nay! let the servant of Christ now remind you, as the servants of Naaman their master—"If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash and be clean?" The fact is, that when men *feel* sin to be a "sickness unto death," *then* they, like Naaman, are prevailed upon to try the remedy: *then*, however the pride of human reason may scorn the simplicity of the remedy, faith the more gratefully rejoices in it; *then*, theirs is the emphatic language of Peter—"Lord, not my hands only, but my feet and my head"—Wash away *all* my sins; heal *all* my infirmities; cleanse and purify *all* my thoughts; try and examine them; see if there be any way of wickedness in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

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## CHAPTER XXXIII.

### THE HOLY SACRAMENT.

But other causes operate against a fulfilment of this duty; and those who are unwilling to fulfil it are very ingenious in assigning reasons for their inconsistency. I say inconsistency; because it is inconsistent to profess ourselves servants of Jesus Christ, unless we obey his commandments. Many, however, who neither hold the ordinance of light moment, nor disallow its importance, nor cavil at its authority; many who read their Bible, and assemble themselves

together in the congregation, and feel each returning Sabbath a delight to them, and flee to prayer in trouble and in joy, and rejoice in their title as Christians—yet are not communicants. Such have, of course, some plea, which they fancy may palliate, if not excuse, their omission of an acknowledged duty. Of these excuses perhaps the one most generally assigned is the overpowering influence of worldly business. They find no time for that serious preparation of mind which is necessary in an humble communicant. True! we cannot too closely examine ourselves, or too strictly judge ourselves: we cannot too carefully mend our ways before "we presume to eat of that bread, and drink of that cup," whereby "we do show the Lord's death till he come[1]." In this we are all agreed. But to turn away from the holy feast, though it saves us from the sin of partaking irreverently, does not save us from the sin of neglecting altogether to partake of it. The one sin does not blot out the other. Consider, moreover, if you, who have an immortal soul to save, and an eternal state before you, pursue the business of this world in so absorbing a spirit, as to render the business of the next world distasteful to you: if, in the endeavour to increase your earthly substance, you neglect your heavenly treasure, you are overreaching yourself; you are calculating very ill your profit and your loss[2]; you give too much to one part of your duty—for no one will deny that a diligent discharge of worldly business is part of Christian duty—and too little to the other. You give your chief care to the concerns of a mortal body, and neglect the concerns of an immortal soul. Because, suppose for a moment that the Sacrament itself could be safely disregarded, it can never be a safe state to be so engrossed with the

[1] 1 Cor. xi. 26.

[2] Matt. xvi. 26. "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" See page 105.

concerns of time, and conformed to this world, as to neglect the concerns of the next. It cannot be safe for an immortal being not to prepare for immortality.

That men *may* receive this gift *unworthily* is, alas! too surely true. Such are they who approach the holy table of the Lord, *not* "truly and earnestly repenting them of their sins;" *not* "in love and charity with their neighbours;" *not* "intending to lead a new life, following the commandments of God, and walking from henceforth in his holy ways;"—but the Church does not invite them, they come unbidden. To them, her's is the voice of warning. To them she declares that the Holy Sacrament, which is "so divine and comfortable a thing to those who receive it worthily," is as dangerous to them that will presume to receive it "unworthily." They are warned to consider "the dignity of that holy mystery, and the great peril of the unworthy receiving thereof; and so to search and examine their own consciences, (and that not lightly, and after the manner of dissemblers with God; but so) that they may come holy and clean to such a heavenly feast, in the marriage garment required by God in Holy Scripture, and be received as worthy partakers of that Holy Table. At their own peril such become communicants; and if they then cherish in their heart dishonour to God by fostering there any known sin—if they harbour in their hearts any hatred, malice, or uncharitableness towards their neighbours as they bring "their gifts to the altar"—the Church raises her voice against them, in the warning language of our Lord—"If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar and go thy way: first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift[1]." The sin, therefore, of the unworthy communicant is his own, and he must answer for it to his God. But the abuse

[1] Matt. v. 23, 24.

of a gift in an unworthy partaker neither lessens its real value to those who partake worthily, nor weakens its obligations upon us all. The sin of the unworthy lessens not the sin of the negligent.

As *he* then pursues the wisest course, who in every state of life doeth *all* things as unto the Lord—fulfilling all his worldly duties in that guarded spirit of watchfulness, and unworldliness, which shall keep him ready for his religious duties; so if any thing can aid him in preserving this frame of mind, it is the spiritual strength promised to those who partake worthily of the body and blood of Christ. Indeed, by partaking *worthily*[1] of the Holy Sacrament of Christ's body and

[1] In adopting the terms—*worthily* and *unworthily*—with reference to communicants, I would be understood as using them in the sense so admirably defined by our Church, throughout her Communion service. We are in ourselves unworthy even to approach the table of the Lord—"*not worthy* so much as to gather up the crumbs under his table." Yet we may humbly trust to *receive, worthily*, the very blessing of which we are undeserving. Thus a criminal condemned to die, is pardoned by an act of grace in the sovereign. He is not worthy the gracious favour bestowed upon him: but by a sincere contrition, by a deep conviction of his crime, and a hearty repentance even to amendment of life, he *receives* the act of grace *worthily*—in a fit and becoming manner: so the communicant may receive *his spiritual* pardon in a fitting frame of mind, though he can never deserve it. In the inimitable language of our Liturgy, he may "be a meet" though undeserving "partaker of those most holy mysteries," "if with a true penitent heart, and lively faith he receives that Holy Sacrament." Or he may "receive the same *unworthily*"—if impressed neither with his own sin, which deserves only punishment, nor with a sense of Divine mercy, which of grace would have saved him, he recurs to his former evil course, and renders of none effect the gracious gift of pardon vouchsafed to him.

Thus, the more you examine and judge your own self, the more deeply you feel your own unworthiness in the sight of God; your own demerit undeserving his favour. At the same time, by humility, by thankfulness, by a strengthened faith, and a holy obedience, you strive to *receive* his grace *worthily*. You heed the guarded invitation of our Church, when she invites to the table, not the spiritually proud, not the self-righteous, not the vain in their own worth, but those who "truly and earnestly repent them of their former sins:" those who "are in love and charity with their neighbours:" those who "intend to lead a new life; following the commandments of God, and walking from henceforth in his holy ways," heeding this invitation, you "draw near with faith, and take the Holy Sacrament to your comfort." Though

blood, you will not be debarred from being diligent and active in that state of life to which it may have pleased God to call you. Far, very far from it. You will rather be sanctified in your diligence, and blessed in your activity; for you will learn to practise the apostolical injunction, to "do all to the glory of God." Your heart will be comforted under its trials; your good principles will be confirmed by a more lively sense of your spiritual and eternal interests; your soul's welfare will be more vividly before you; and you will be reminded more forcibly of the awakening truth, that the "one thing needful" is—so to pass through things temporal, that you lose not finally the things eternal. True! you must be more watchful of your conduct; you must take special heed not wilfully to break *his* laws, to whom you have so solemnly pledged your obedience. But that consideration must

unworthy of the gift, you receive it worthily. Sufficiently clear, however, in her distinction in the use of terms as our Church is for the humble-minded Christian—clear as it is possible to be from the nature of language, where always some part of the sense of a term is reflected from the context—notwithstanding this sufficient clearness, cavillers will be found even among professing Christians, to carp at the expression—"a worthy communicant." Let me hope that the suggestions above made will point out the absurdity, as well as spiritual self-sufficiency of those cavillers. Let me remind such, that they place themselves in one or other of these positions. They either misapply language through ignorance, or some secret hatred of the simplicity of our beautiful Liturgy lurks in their heart, and they cavil at the terms used, only as those terms extinguish their own high-flown pretensions to be "*not* as other men." These "righteous over-much" are in a dilemma—they are either ignorant, or they are uncharitable. Let them choose their alternative. In either case their position is painful and perilous. What do they but discourage the penitent from fulfilling a duty, wilfully to neglect which, he knows to be an offence against the command of his Saviour, yet to share which, his humble view of his own demerits makes him feel all unworthy? The cavil ends not in a mere confusion of terms, but by making sad that broken and contrite heart, which the Lord hath not made sad*, risks the presumptuous sin of sinking repentance to despair.

The distinction, therefore, to which the reader's attention has been drawn, cannot be too heedfully remembered. See note, p. 36.

* Isa. lvii. 15.

not deter you. The *same* watchfulness, and the *same* obedience, are equally required of you, whether you are a *communicant* or *not*. So that if you are not safe in coming to the Holy Sacrament, neither are you safe in staying away. It is a poor plea to neglect a sacred and acknowledged duty, because it would have the effect of promoting a strictly religious life. In short, if the world now so occupies you, as to prevent your fulfilling your religious duties, you must give only so much to it, as shall leave you free for the work of your salvation, and obedience to your God. Remember, that *want of leisure can never excuse want of religion.*

To these causes, which the busy part of the Christian world assign as reasons for not attending at the holy table of the Lord, are superadded by the poor, the various distractions and perplexities, and sometimes bickerings to which those perplexities give rise, which render domestic repose difficult of attainment; and which, as it is urged, unfit the mind for the solemn service of the Sacrament. Now suppose that such difficulties and perplexities be those only incident to a poor station, we are not for a moment to suppose that they can be obstacles to the fulfilment of a positive duty. Poverty—honest poverty—as it was sanctified by the lowly birth of the Redeemer, so it is, and for ever will be blessed of Him who is the Lord equally of poor and rich; "the maker of them all[1]." "To the poor" in station, as in spirit, "the Gospel is preached." Are you poor? do you find it difficult to divest yourselves of the weight of worldly care as you provide from your scanty means for the children whom you dearly love? and do these cares often make you irritable? do they induce harsh thoughts and bitter words? and do you feel yourselves thereby unfitted to approach the more immediate presence of your

[1] Prov. xxii. 2. "The rich and the poor meet together: the Lord is the maker of them all."

God? In the first place, your very humility proves that you know such feelings to be in themselves wrong, and to be repented of, whether or no you approach the Lord's table; or you would not be afraid to carry them to God. Surely, the sooner you get rid of them the better. And how are you to be freed from them? You and I know, that we are not sufficient of ourselves for these things; our sufficiency is of God[1]. *His grace* we must trust to for aid to bring our resolutions to good effect. Behold! his grace is ready for us; but we do not take the *means* of grace—even the strengthening and refreshing of our souls by the body and blood of Christ. Why, think ye, has He left his memorable invitation:—"Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will refresh you?"—Do you suppose that these words can apply to those who are at ease; who know nothing but peace and tranquillity? I should rather at once apply them to *you*. We all indeed are heavy laden with the burden of our sins, and ought to feel weary of them. That spiritual burden you share with others. *You*, however, have your own added burden of poverty, and distracting cares, and perplexities, tempting to murmurs before God, and unchristian tempers before men. You then are the very persons whom the Saviour invites—"Come to me, and be at rest." And oh! the holy calm, when the soul, casting off worldly cares and troubles, reposes in the assured presence, and gracious love of its dying Redeemer, feeding on Him by faith in his merits, and with thanksgiving for his mercy! I wish you would try the duty. How boldly then could you commit to the care of that God and Saviour, in time, and in eternity, the welfare of yourself and your family! You indeed would, after all, confess yourself an unprofitable servant: but you would have done what was your duty to do; and there-

[1] 2 Cor. iii. 5. "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves, to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God."

fore might safely trust the rest to his mercy and love —infinite as they are gracious.

Having thus reflected upon the duty in question; convinced moreover that your blessed Saviour Himself commands its performance, and that a fulfilment of it tends to purify your every thought, spiritualize all your affections, and draw your whole heart from a love of the world to a devotedness to God, you cannot but allow the necessity of obedience, and gratefully acknowledge the blessed hopes by which that obedience is encouraged. You are aware too, that the Redeemer would never have instituted such an ordinance, hallowed it by his own presence, and imposed it by motives addressed to every better feeling of the soul—and then left to our own option, to our own wayward and capricious will, whether we would obey or disobey.

Yet perhaps you still neglect this acknowledged duty. If so, there must be some secret sin which besets you—some sin which you dare not take with you to the table of the Lord, but which you, fatally for your peace, will not cast from you. This is truly a very dreadful frame of mind; and I can conceive no more painful state of feeling. What a tempest of the soul!—a sense of right and a consciousness of wrong conflicting for the mastery. You may well fear *so* to approach the Lord's table. But do not make a merit of your fear. True! you must not bear the sin with you, as a communicant. To rush with unhallowed step to the altar, and there pretend honour to Him whom sin dishonours, is to mock the Saviour; is again to plat a crown of thorns for his brow; again to put a reed into his hand in derision of his sovereignty; again to crucify Him [1]. Remember that the cherished sin which renders you unfit to be a worthy communicant—one who receives God's mercy and grace in a worthy manner [2]—is not less sin, because

[1] Heb. vi. 6.

[2] See Note in page 179.

it prevents you from the added guilt of hypocrisy in taking the Holy Sacrament. It is equally sin, when you take it with you into the congregation for public prayer; equally sin, when you pray with your family; equally sin, when you do not pray. Surely, "the wages of sin—is Death," even though the sin be concealed in the deepest recesses of your heart. That you feel the misery of this state, it is impossible to doubt. You are no stranger to religion, but a professing Christian! one who, by your conviction of the awfulness of sin, separating you from your God, evidence that "you have tasted of the heavenly gift," even the gift of grace, which has given that conviction. At the same time you love your sin. Be awake to your own inconsistency. Is not God equally present every where? knowing all things, even to the very secret thought? Now if absence from the holy ordinance could remove the guilt of sin from your soul, could prevent or mitigate its punishment, or screen it from the eye of Him who is all-present to see it, and almighty to punish it—*Then*, reason there were for imagining that, by withdrawing yourselves from the table of the Lord, you might escape at once his notice, and his anger; and discretion might be pleaded for the measure. But even that wretched plea must fail. Nay, reason itself is shamed at such a plea. Where and how is your sin to be forgiven? and I take for granted that you intend, like the trembling Felix, at some time or other—at some "*convenient* season [1]"—to "repent and turn to God [2]." Who can pardon for the past? Who give grace for the future? Who—but the Being, whose mercy you will not seek, because you will keep and cherish some sin, which your conscience tells you must separate you from Him. I am the more anxious for you, because it is clear that your own mind must experience a sad conflict of feeling. You will, perhaps, even say, as

[1] Acts xxiv. 25.

[2] Ibid. xxvi. 20.

many do, "We mean no contempt towards our Saviour." "We do not intend to set up ourselves against God."—Now words are easily spoken; but can words weigh against actions? "*Not* every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, *but* he that *doeth the will* of my Father which is in heaven." And is it not the will of your Father who is in heaven, that you obey the commands of his Son who came down from heaven? And did not the Son, who came down from heaven to earth, then leave recorded his positive command, —"Do this in remembrance of me?" You cannot overthrow this reasoning. You feel its force, because you feel its truth. Choose, therefore, this day, whom you will serve—will you continue a wretched slave to your sin, or will you be a happy servant of your God? On the one hand, woe awaits you! in this world, the upbraidings of conscience, the reproofs of the word of God, the sharp strivings of his Spirit; and in the next world, that unutterable woe, which is reserved for the impenitent. On the other hand, grace awaits you in your penitence; grace—full, free, effective; enabling you to do the will of God, and to resist your own. I trust you will resolve wisely. Cast from you the sin which has hitherto stood between you and your God. You need not doubt a welcome on your return. The voice of mercy and of love is ever calling you, "Come to me, and be at rest."

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## CHAPTER XXXIV.

### THE HOLY SACRAMENT.

And have you by earnest prayer gained grace to bring your good resolutions to good effect? Have you returned to your Redeemer a penitent? Have

you sealed your repentance at his table? Blessed be your deed! Who shall doubt a blessing upon it? Did ever the wanderer return to his God, and not find a welcome?

What a changed being you are! The sin removed, its misery is removed. "The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin[1]." "Old things are indeed passed away; behold, all things are become new[2]." All is peace. In the storm of conflicting passions which lately agitated you, you prayed to Him, who, amid all your disobedience, was never far from you. You prayed, "Lord, save me, or I perish[3]." Your prayer was heard. "He arose, and rebuked the winds and the waves." What a calm your soul enjoys! Anger no more masters you. Hatred and malice find no room in a heart which is occupied by Christian love. Envy pines, for you cherish her no more: she is become her own tormentor, instead of yours. Putting away all manner of sin, and mourning all your infirmities, you no longer complain how "strict your life must be." You no longer find religion a hard service. You experience now, what before you disbelieved, that her "ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." You were once careless alike of the duties you owed to God, and to man. You are now careful of both; you have learned that no appointed duty is a trifle—because for the due discharge of every such duty, you must reckon at the tribunal of your God. You find it, for instance, impossible to be too watchful of your conduct towards others, when you read the startling truth—that, with regard to social intercourse, "for every idle word which men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment[4]." Your neighbour's good name, his peace

[1] 1 John i. 7. [2] 2 Cor. v. 17. [3] Matt. viii. 25.

[4] Matt. xii. 36. "But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." Few declarations are more calculated to startle the heedless than this. It conveys a useful warning to us all. But it especially

and comfort, are, therefore, sacred subjects with you now. Your love for him is interwoven with your love for God. Indeed, in every part of life, since you have "fed on Christ in your heart by faith, with thanksgiving[1]," you will be a new creature, even as one born again; so completely will nature have been changed by grace. For instance, the Sabbath, which, in your former days of health and strength, too often was no Sabbath to you—a day often either of continued business, or worldly pleasure, or unhallowed rest—will see you henceforth regular in your attendance upon public worship, to the honour of your God,

warns the slanderer, who throws about him words of ill-will to his neighbour's harm, and satisfies his conscience with, "Tush, God shall not see it!" Yet God *doth* see; and God will punish the evil which He sees. Nay, He hath classed together the slanderer and blasphemer—the offender against his neighbour, and the offender against his God. The general source of slander is envy. Suppose any one to have a higher fame, or a more prosperous condition, than his neighbours, he becomes to bad men an object of envy. The envious man, with all the meanness of a little mind, hopes himself to rise higher, and appear more conspicuous either as to wealth or station, in proportion as those above him can be lowered: he therefore sets about the work insidiously—by defaming and slandering; well knowing that the world is always ready to hear evil of others, whether true or false; because self-love is gratified, and pride of heart sustained. Nor does judgment await the slanderer only in a future state. The slanderer, when he has effected his object, and murdered the reputation of his neighbour, has no sooner come to himself and contemplated his own work, than he stands self-condemned even here. Passion is over; hatred satiated. Like Cain, he finds no rest. He bears with him the mark of his crime stamped on his heart; and, wander where he may, he cannot recal the past: nor knows he how to heal the wound his slanderous tongue hath made—but oh! how awful, as well as grievous, to feel that he has inflicted that wound! Watch then against the beginning of sin, as well towards your fellow-creatures as towards your God; and remember, "that for every idle word which men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." Refer to page 139, Note.

[1] The beautiful address in our Liturgy to the communicant, on his reception of the consecrated elements—an address marked by a spirit of counsel and affectionate supplication—every way edifying—"The body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life. Take and eat this, in remembrance that Christ died for thee, and feed on him in thy heart by faith with thanksgiving."

and the welfare of your soul. The Bible will be your delight. You will no longer *fear* to open its pages. They will not, as they used to do in your sin, speak very swords to you; your conscience then sharpening them by its own accusation. Surely now they will speak peace. They will tell of pardon for your sin, of compassion upon your infirmities: they will declare oblivion of negligences and ignorances[1]. No terror now rushes to your heart, when you think of approaching the house of God. Prayer is your refuge and your consolation. Unworthy you are—unworthy we all are of ourselves to draw nigh unto Him; but you have found One who is worthy, and who will plead his own worthiness in your behalf. And can *He* plead in vain?

I rejoice thus to picture you, my reader, not as one stifling the cravings of your heart for God's favour; not as formerly, stilling by a great effort of self-control the voice of conscience, as it reproved you: but opening your whole heart to a present God, in prayer, and penitence, and praise. You pour out your soul before Him, you confess your manifold sins; you avow your fear; you declare your hopes; you cast all your burden upon Him; resolving to amend your ways and your doings; day by day, hour by hour, you implore grace to bring these resolutions to good effect. Your heart is ready for duty. You have been communing with your God. You feel the influence of his presence. When *with Him*, what can this world harm you? What can it profit you, *without Him?* In your religious as in your social duties, you will always have at hand counsel and comfort to walk in a holy way, and you will find by happy experience, that no fancied benefit was prepared for the soul, when the Lord commanded us to observe this his holy ordinance in remembrance of Him. We bring the Saviour even into our hearts, and his Spirit into our lives. The

[1] Jer. xxxi. 34.

servant is enabled to do his Master's will—the disciple is enabled to keep the commandments of his Lord.

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## CHAPTER XXXV.

### RECOVERY.

When St. Paul found that the effect of his first epistolary charge to the Corinthian Church was to incite in the members of it a new and evident activity in spiritual life; that, "awake at last unto righteousness," they had betaken themselves to hearty self-examination, with a steady resolution to amend their ways and doings, he proceeded in a second address to commend their improvement, describing in his own full and peculiar style of eloquence—full to overflowing—the signs by which he was certified of their sincerity. Language seems inadequate to express his sentiments—"For behold this self-same thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge[1]!"

Methinks such are the full feelings of your own heart now! So is it at length with you, O my reader! *You*, too, have repented, with godly sorrow, your past sins, negligences, and ignorances; you, too, awake at last to the wisdom, as well as duty, of heeding "the

[1] 2 Cor. vii. 11. It is true that St. Paul's primary object in this passage was of a particular nature—to encourage his converts in their faithful adherence to him as their minister, and their withdrawal from the influence of those who endeavoured to separate them from his guidance, and bring confusion on the Church. But the principle involved in the passage is clearly of general application—an energetic change from error to truth.

one thing needful," bestir yourself in earnest to the great work of your salvation. Your communings with God and your soul—what a salutary change have they now wrought in you! what *carefulness* to keep the strait and narrow road of holiness which leadeth unto life! yea, what *clearing* of yourselves from all the entanglements of sin and the world, which once impeded your onward course of duty, and bound you captive! and from which now you are free! yea, what *indignation*, equally against those who tempted you to evil, and yourself who yielded to them! yea, what *fear* of again admitting even the first approaches of those sins, which have cost you such bitter repentance! yea, what *vehement desire* after holy and spiritual things! yea, what *zeal* to prove by practical piety the sincerity of your convictions! yea, what *revenge*, as it were, against yourself, and your former evil courses—bearing willingly now the burden of that cross, which of old you disregarded; and now cheerfully following that Saviour, whose servant you hitherto had been by name alone!

Perhaps God has been pleased graciously to restore your bodily powers, and Hezekiah's long day is added to your life. The languor of sickness is gone. You again feel the elasticity of health: your fear of present death hath passed away, and your spirit rejoiceth. Well may you rejoice! Life itself is a blessing. To recover it when it appeared well-nigh lost, is therefore just cause for thankfulness; and when again you see the cheering light of the sun, and walk in its beams as one having a new existence—unexpectedly restored to family and friends—it were strange if your heart did not expand with a joy all unfelt before. But I trust that your chief joy springs from the thought, that in the season of sickness to your body, you gained health to your soul. No longer "conformed to this world, but transformed by the renewing of your mind," you now live as one who is of the family of God. When you repented, your heavenly Father rejoiced before his

angels [1]: and who shall doubt but that those heavenly servants shared in that joy? How can we suppose that there is not joy in the host of heaven when the penitent holds on his course of faith unweariedly, and lives unto righteousness? And if it be part of true wisdom, to gather to ourselves, as it were, every encouragement towards a holy and religious life, it were unwise not to cherish the reflection, that when we are painfully struggling against our infirmities, and patiently bearing the weight of our cross—the blessed

[1] Luke xv. 10. "Likewise I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."

Although in this passage, the joy spoken of is in the first instance referrible to Him, who deigns to feel towards us as a Father on the return of his prodigal son; nor is any particular mention made as to the angels who are present about his throne, sharing in that joy and its cause; still, being present, they must be cognizant of the joy and its cause. The very designation which, by way of eminence, ancient writers give to them—that of *intelligences*—marks especially their enlarged knowledge; and we cannot but suppose that their joy and sorrow would be commensurate with that knowledge. Whatever tended to the glory of Him they continually worshipped, even suppose them unaffected by the welfare of man, would itself be a ground of joy with them. Hence they would rejoice in the conversion of a sinner. But that from the beginning of time, they have been, are, and to the end of time will be, interested in the welfare of us, who, though inferior creatures, are yet, like them, the creatures of the same eternal God, is sufficiently evident from the revealed word, to justify us in rejoicing in this sympathy. Why else, when Jehovah laid the foundations of the earth, did "all the sons of God shout for joy*?" Why, when the Prince of peace came to save a sinful race, and open the kingdom of heaven to those whom he should redeem, did they join their glorious voices in songs of joy, that there would be "glory to God on high, on earth peace, good will to man†?" Why, when such special trials of faith have happened to the servants of God, that special aid has been required and vouchsafed, why have angels been then the appointed ministers to "succour and defend?" Why, when the afflicted Lazarus sunk under his accumulated misery, did angels bear him to his rest?—Surely angels do sympathize with man, and share the joy of the Holy One, enthroned in heaven, where there is added to the communion of saints one pardoned sinner more.

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* Job xxxviii. 7.

† Luke ii. 14.—Our Church has beautifully encouraged us in these reflections by her "Collect for the Festival of St. Michael and all Angels."

angels, those created higher intelligences, with whom we look one day to be associated in the realms of bliss, are witnesses, even in this passing world of sorrow—and anxious witnesses, though unseen—of all our temptations, all our struggles, all our patient endurance. They mourn our failure; they rejoice in our success: "ready to succour and defend us on earth, as they alway do God service in heaven." "Are they not all,"—asks the Apostle—"are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation[1]?"

To stimulate your further vigilance in a holy course, forget not the monitory reasoning of David, when in sickness he implored the Almighty to grant him lengthened days. He urged his prayer on the express ground, that so he might have time and opportunity to strengthen his spiritual life, ere his natural life closed in death. "O spare me a little, that I may recover my strength, before I go hence, and be no more seen[2]." Are you mercifully spared for a little time? Surely the object God has in view in this exercise of his mercy, is the recovery of your strength; your *spiritual* strength; before you "go *hence*"—

[1] Heb. i. 14.

[2] Ps. xxxix. 15. This Psalm is one of those appointed to be read in the Burial Service: and the verse itself would seem especially calculated then to speak a warning, to which the most insensible heart must give heed. When the survivor, as he mourns the dead, repeats these words, and feels that *he*, too, ere long, *must* pass away; and *may*, *soon*, pass away; when he feels, too, his own spiritual weakness, his own unpreparedness perhaps to stand, himself a spirit, before the Father of spirits—with what secret awe does he retire into his inmost thoughts, and in that solemn moment of sorrow haply breathe a heartfelt prayer, that God would indeed spare *him*, that *he*, too, may himself recover his spiritual strength, ere he also shall "go hence, and be no more seen!"

Mourner! Have such been thy thoughts? such thy prayer?—May God, in his mercy, sanctify those thoughts: may He, in his faithfulness, hear and answer thy prayer in peace; may He bless thee, even to the end! Then will thy day of mourning be as a seedtime, in which thou hast sowed precious seed; and at the great harvest of the world, thou mayest bring thy sheaves rejoicing. Ps. cxxvi. 6.

where the Gospel continually calls the sinner to repentance; promising pardon to the penitent, and to the pardoned breathing hope—and pass to the *eternal* world. In *that* world there is no knowledge, no device, whereby the contrite may turn and be saved: else the woeful prayer of Dives had not been rejected[1]. Remember, that if death be for a short season warded off, the day of its power must come, when you will be no more seen among the children of men. Watch then in health, even as in sickness, for the welfare of your soul; and now that you are recovered, and mingle again in a world, where the hurry of business, or the allurements of pleasure, are continually tempting men to evil, watch especially against those occasions of sin, to which you found yourself formerly most exposed, and which caused you so bitter a repentance in the sad and silent hours of sickness. Bear with you into active life those clear views of Christian duty, which long and faithful communing with God and your own spirit have, by Divine grace, at present fixed in your heart. God grant that they be fixed firmly! Relax not indeed a proper diligence in the duties of that state of life, to which Divine Providence may have called you. Be the *more* diligent. "*Whatsoever* thy hand findeth to do, do it with *all thy might;*" but do it "not as unto men, but as *unto God;*" acting always *conscientiously*—as one who, at the last great judgment-day, must give account to the Searcher of hearts for all you do, or say, or think. Whether you are worshipping the Almighty in the courts of his house of prayer; or are engaged in the daily concerns of common life with your fellow-creatures; let a conscientious adherence to the Divine law act equally upon your heart and conduct. Let a prompt acquiescence in the counsels of the Spirit of grace be the secret spring of all your actions. Love to God and love to man must go hand in hand. The envious man, the

[1] Luke xvi. 24—27.

maligner, the sneerer, the proud of heart, and the self-righteous in spirit, may claim to be servants of God and his Christ; but they are not of those servants who do their Master's will. If love to God be the first commandment, the second is like unto it—"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Learn thus habitually to act in your recovered health, as you feel that in your *last* sickness you will wish to have acted. *Live, as you would wish to die*—at peace with God, through the Saviour; and at peace with all men for the Saviour's sake. Thus I trust you will return to active life in a new and happy frame of mind; blessing and blessed. Whether you be rich or poor, learned or unlearned, set a glorious example of the power of the Gospel, to guide by its word into the path of heaven; to strengthen by its spirit to keep that path; and to give peace by its promises in sickness and in health, in life and in death. Thus will you both bless and be blessed. Your light will so shine before men, that others, seeing your good works, shall at once perceive the power which worketh them to be from above, and so glorify your Father which is in heaven.

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## CHAPTER XXXVI.

### RECOVERY.

"When thou vowest a vow unto God," saith the Scripture, "defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed [1]." How often did you upon your sick bed vow unto God that if He would be pleased to restore you, and "try you once again [2]," you would not only never *willingly*

[1] Eccles. v. 4.

[2] Luke xiii. 8. "And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it and dung it."

And what other object has a merciful God in view, when He gives

sin against Him: but would lead the rest of your life according to your new conviction of a Christian's duty. Yours was the anxious reflection of David, when his heart overflowed with gratitude, as yours now does, for special mercies vouchsafed to him. "What reward [1] shall I give unto the Lord for all the benefits that he hath done unto me?" and you adopted perhaps his pious resolution—"I will receive the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows now in the presence of all his people, in the courts of the Lord's house, even in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem."

Whosoever may have recovered from the sad hours of sickness, must doubtless share the feeling which gave rise to these sentiments in the heart of David. When the shadow of death is by God's mercy withdrawn, and the light of life again gleams upon them, they cannot but long to enter into the courts of the house of the Lord, and in health confess before men, *Him*, whom in the lonely hours of sickness they found to be their Saviour and their God. Perhaps, however, you who now read these pages are a mother! With what added force must the Psalmist's reflection appeal

added years of life, but that we may cultivate our hearts; in order that faith may not be a dead profession, but a living principle—not like the barren fig-tree; but a faith rich in good works; plentifully bringing forth fruit unto holiness, to the honour of our God; the end whereof may be life eternal?

[1] Ps. cxvi. 11—13. 16. Our Church, with her wonted careful discrimination in adapting to particular occasions appropriate services, has appointed this Psalm as one of those to be read in the office for "The Churching of Women."

The word *reward* has here rather a peculiar sense. It means *return*. Thus, when we read, that every man, even the wicked, shall receive the just *reward* for his deeds*, we see at once, that the word means due recompense, or just return. Now, as the due return for righteousness is blessing, and for wickedness, punishment, so the due reward, or *return*, for mercies graciously bestowed, is obedience gratefully offered.

* Luke xxiii. 41. Heb. ii. 2. 2 Pet. ii. 13. Rev. xxii. 12.

to *you* for sympathy! *You* have heard the words, when your whole soul has been poured out in thankfulness to the Almighty for more signal mercies vouchsafed to you: even when you kneeled before the throne of grace, in thankful acknowledgment of deliverance from "the great pain and peril of childbirth." With all your heart, and soul, and mind, you then joined in the beautiful and appropriate prayer of our Church, that "through God's help," you might thenceforth "both faithfully live and walk according to his will in this life present, and also be partaker of everlasting glory in the life to come, through Jesus Christ." In that hour, when your heart was specially susceptible to the appeal of gratitude, how earnestly did you devote yourself to a religious life! Remember, how solemnly *then* was your pledge given! Forget not to redeem it *now*.

To *all*, however, this duty applies. Art thou raised from a sick bed? In health pay the vow made in sickness: pay it boldly, as you vowed it resolutely[1]. Be not like Peter, of a cowardice as memorable as his resolve was bold[2]; but confess your Saviour before men with a firm trust in Divine grace to aid your own resolution; and fear not then to bring the same to good effect. *Pay* the vow, as thou didst *make* it—with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. Surely gratitude might render payment not only a duty, but a delight.

It may however happen that various obstacles present themselves against this decisive course of action. Not only may the pride of your own heart again strive

[1] On this subject I would refer the grateful heart to chapters xxxiii.—xxxv. The observations there would seem peculiarly suitable.

[2] The bravest spirit could entertain no more bold or worthy resolve than that of Peter—"Though I should *die* with thee, yet will I *not* deny thee." The most panic-stricken heart could utter no more base denial—"I know not the man!" Deep and blessed was the penitence, which moved the offended Master to receive again into favour the faithless servant! "He sowed in tears: he reaped in joy."

for mastery, now the fear of present death is removed —not only may former habits return with former feelings; business and pleasure alternately drawing you off from the strait and narrow path of holiness; but you fail perhaps in moral courage to exhibit fearlessly before your fellow-creatures the changed life of one renewed by the Spirit of grace. You fear the ridicule of some sneering neighbour; dread the shafts of his wit; and are ashamed of that unreserved avowal to which yet your conscience is urging you, and your heart longs to enter upon. Let him taunt you as a Bible reader! Can he speak to you words of deeper wisdom, of nobler charity, of richer consolation? Let him mock you as a church-goer! Does he find in his hours of dissipation abroad, or idleness at home on that day of the Lord, the peace, the comfort, the conscious rectitude, which the evening hour brings to you, when you close your eyes at night, under the sheltering wing of Him, whom you have honoured on his holy day? What if he sneer at your attendance upon the ordinances? Take but care to "lead a godly, righteous, and sober life," agreeably to your profession as a servant of Christ, and in his heart he respects and envies you; though his pride and self-conceit permit him not to speak the truth, by which he would himself stand condemned. Your course is clear; make a conscience of *all* your duties, civil and religious, social and domestic. Live to God as well as to man, and the wit of man can never harm you. If indeed it were necessary still further to guard you on this point, I would remind you of the blessed Saviour's express precept respecting it, and of the Apostle's continued warning, that such enemies there would ever be to oppose the humble followers of Christ, in their strait and narrow path of duty. How nobly does our Divine Master, anticipating their attacks upon his faithful servants, animate us to scorn the puny enmity of wicked men! How unanswerably does He argue against fearing their restricted cruelty; whose enmity reacheth not the grave! How anxiously

does he warn against this fear, as the rock on which too many make shipwreck of their faith! He knew well that this degrading passion would operate so widely and so variously, that it could not be guarded against with too much care. How does it act upon you? Does the direct reproach of a wicked companion deter you from the fulfilment of some duty, either to God, your neighbour, or yourself? Or is it, that you picture to yourself the silent contempt, or the insidious sneering, which an avowal of religious principles may perchance bring upon you; and though you long to join in prayer and supplication with the assembled congregation in the house of the Lord, ardently desire to share the holy ordinances, yearn to assemble your household to family prayer, and are ready to join in religious converse, and confess at once that you wish to lead your life religiously; yet you have not courage to begin?—Now, whom fearest thou? a mortal man like thyself, who, suppose he could harm you, can injure only your present peace and quiet! Surely it were better to fear the more powerful of those who require you to do their bidding. Heed, then, the counsel of your Saviour—given as wisely as affectionately—"I say unto you, my *friends*, be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will *forewarn* you whom ye *shall* fear—fear *him* which, after he hath killed, *hath power to cast into hell:* yea, I say unto you, fear *him*[1]." In your sickness you felt the force of this reasoning. You then reproved your own folly for having, in health, so often allowed the malice and the reproofs of the wicked to turn you aside from the right way. "Why,"—your heart whispered to you, "Why fear those from whose enmity either my own death or theirs must soon release me; and not rather fear the great God, who can destroy my soul, if unrighteous; or save it, if penitent?" O, be wise! In health act upon the

[1] Luke xii. 4, 5.

reasoning, the full force of which you felt in your sickness. *Pay thy vow.*

Consider, too, if any one taunts you with being religious, and questions your sincerity, and mocks your change of life—those taunts are your trial. You are but paying the natural penalty of your former irreligious conduct; for these very reproaches form part of that weight which you bear, in bearing your cross. Be assured, also, that by patient continuance in well-doing, you will gradually put to silence the ignorance of these foolish men, and they will, at length, cease to persecute, when they find consistency. You are now armed with the fear of God, and the love of God. You fear—*not* man, whose hatred killeth the body only, but *God*, "who, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell." You love—*not* this world which passeth away; but *Him*, who is Lord of the world to come, and who hath prepared in that world, for those who love Him, such good things as pass man's understanding[1]. Your life will now be in evidence that your *fear* of God has been the "*beginning* of wisdom," and your *love* of God, the *perfecting* thereof. The mocker has his answer in your *conduct*. That will reply in language, which he who runs may read—"I have a soul to save; and therefore I will not again risk the loss of it, either through fear of man, or neglect of God. I must die; and you, who now ridicule my conversion, must die; and we must, *both*, stand before the judgment-seat of Christ; your harassing contempt of me will then have passed away, but my patience shall then not fail of its sure, though undeserved recompense. The God whom I fear now, will be my Saviour then."

Thus, methinks, you will repose your wearied mind, after all the distracting cares of a Christian struggle with the opposition of the world, and the weaknesses

[1] 1 Cor. ii. 9. "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

of your own heart. Like a pilgrim, who, after long wandering, worn and fainting in the parched desert, finds, at length, the welcome water-springs, slakes his burning thirst there, and feels new vigour animate his frame; so you rejoice to find yourself by the well of the water of life; you, too, wearied with your long pilgrimage, welcome the gracious stream, drink thereof, and find strength and refreshment to your soul. There you rest—at peace with God, with your fellow-creatures, and with yourself.

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## CHAPTER XXXVII.

### EVIL TURNED TO GOOD.

HAVING thus, by Divine grace aiding you, risen above the fear of man, and learned to bear without dread the scorn and contumely of the malicious, you will be enabled, by the spirit of faith, to advance still further towards Christian perfection [1]. You will be able to turn to good account, and apply even to your joy, as well as to your spiritual benefit, those efforts by which the malicious seek to injure you. You will view such attempts to destroy your peace, not only as among the dispensations which your Lord and heavenly Father appoints; but as a trial, by bearing which with resignation and even cheerfulness, you not only give proof of a faithful service and a filial reverence, but promote his glory. *Therefore* you rejoice [2].

[1] The Christian is always in progress. No pause to exertion on this side the grave! Every follower of the Saviour is like St. Paul in that respect—"He *goeth on* unto perfection"—that point, ever to be aimed at, yet ever eluding our grasp, in *this* world. In a future world, we shall be complete in the righteousness of Christ. Phil. iii. 12.

[2] It was upon this view of the case, that St. Paul, whilst he confessed afflictions to be in themselves, "not joyous, but grievous," yet "rejoiced," and "gloried in tribulations." Heb. xii. 11. Rom. v. 3. 2 Cor. vii. 4.

That this particular trial of Christian peace is specially severe, when it is laid upon one whose heart is inclined only to charity towards all men, is not denied. "Why then *this* trial?"—whispers the heart of the benevolent—"I could have borne any sorrow rather than this."

Happily for us, we are not to choose our trials. Even our Divine example, Jesus Christ, did not choose his trials: else He had spared Himself the agony, which well-nigh mastered the nature He had assumed, and which in that nature He implored his Father to remove from Him[1]. He distinctly speaks of his course of life as one *appointed* Him.—"Father! I have glorified thee on earth: I have finished the work which *thou* gavest me to do[2]." So is it with ourselves. We, also, are to do the work our heavenly Father may see fit to give us to do: and by so doing, we are permitted to encourage an humble hope that we also glorify Him[3]. Indeed, were we to select our own trials, we should probably select them in exact opposition to those appointed us. Nature would prompt us to choose what we should fancy ourselves best able to bear; forgetting, that then the trial would be hardly felt as the burden of that cross, which every follower of the Saviour is solemnly warned he must bear, *patiently;* or his discipleship will not be recognized, when the cross shall triumph. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and *take up* his cross, and follow me." And who expects to find a cross *easy* to bear? Hence, upon the noble-minded, the generous, and the good, is often laid the cross of contumely unmerited, of benevolence unrequited, of excellence maligned—because *that* is exactly the cross, the weight of which they cannot bear without seeking a heavenly arm to

[1] "Nevertheless, *not* my will, *but* THINE, be done." Luke xxii. 42.

[2] John xvii. 4.

[3] Matt. v. 16. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

help them; a heavenly spirit to sustain them; a heavenly hope to cheer them. Loss of this world's goods, deprivation of mere worldly enjoyments, and even of the more evidently Divine visitations, would less have disturbed their repose, than loss of a well-earned fame, or a due return for benefits conferred. But where then would have been the weight of the cross to *them?* —So it is with all trials, which the wisdom of an all-seeing God sees fit to lay upon us. That which would be least pain, is often spared, because it would not answer its purpose of disciplining man for heaven. In short, a very little reflection is necessary to convince us, that better far is it, that God choose our trials for us, than that we should choose them for ourselves.

Suppose, then, that your particular trial be the bearing the enmity of those who are set against you, "without any offence or fault of you[1]." Let it be your care that you give them no reasonable cause of anger or hatred. If they pretend to find occasion against you, let it be with you as with Daniel, that they find *none* occasion *except* in your faithful adherence to your religious duties[2]. In that case, it were easy to bear even the despitefulness of the proud patiently. You will view it no longer only as the cruelty of man, but as the *will* of God. And *so viewed*, the effect of it upon your peace and comfort is not what your enemy intended—to destroy them. You understand with the Psalmist, that the sorrow in question is but one of those numerous modes of trial, by which God proves the children of men. You pity the ungodly, even while they persecute and provoke you to anger. Your mind is now convinced, that wicked men, whilst they dishonour God, and injure their neighbour, though they must bear their own iniquity, are yet made instruments to further the very object they purpose to overthrow. They are used

[1] Ps. lix. 4. [2] Dan. vi. 4, 5.

as instruments in the hand of God to chastise the children whom He loveth; and thus afford opportunity to the righteous to give higher evidence of their *Faith*. The prayer of the afflicted still is—"Deliver my soul from the *ungodly*, which is a *sword of thine*[1]."

What an entire and happy change of feeling is wrought in you by *thus* viewing the malice of an enemy! Not only does pity usurp the place of anger, but you pray for him who curses you. Well may you pray for him! What if he be rich in worldly wealth, or high in worldly station; he is poor in spiritual riches; he is indeed low in spiritual hope. Vain, perhaps, of his fancied superiority, ingenious in devising plans for giving pain; powerful from his wealth or influence to tyrannize over his neighbour,

[1] Ps. xvii. 13.

When our blessed Saviour found Himself betrayed by Judas, not one harsh word was directed by Him against the false disciple—the cold-hearted, calculating betrayer of the Master who trusted him, and the Friend who cherished him. His *sin*, indeed, our Lord laid open to its very depth, and exhibited in all its enormity: the sinner He left to his own fearful responsibility; affirming the sin to be greater than even that of Pilate, who pronounced sentence upon Him. "*Thou*," said the accused Saviour to Pilate—"*Thou* couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore *he* that delivered me unto thee hath the *greater* sin." And justly was this comparison drawn. Judas sinned against conviction, against better knowledge, against warning, against all laws, human and Divine. *He* delivered up the Master he was bound to protect; he betrayed the Friend he professed to love: he had the word of prophecy in his own Scriptures, which forewarned him, and would fain have deterred him from aiding in accomplishing the foretold sufferings of his Friend. Whereas, even "his right hand was a right hand of iniquity*;" his pledge of an assured friendship proved to be the sign of an infamous betrayal. Not holding it cruelty enough, either openly to denounce our blessed Saviour, or even secretly to betray Him, he dared to meet the eye of his victim, and to give the greeting of affection, in token that He was the object marked for destruction. "Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he: hold him fast."—Matt. xxvi. 48. So surely does sin harden the heart, whilst it blinds the understanding; rendering men as cruel towards their fellow-creatures, as they are guilty before God.

* Ps. cxliv. 11.

and exhibit all the evil feeling, which united envy and malice generate—you view him only as the unwilling instrument of good, in the hands of that Being, to whom you address yourself in the appropriate words of David—"The fierceness of man shall turn to thy praise, and the fierceness of them shalt thou refrain[1]." Oh! how is this proud, and vain, and boastful spirit lowered! He thought to disquiet thee in thy new and amended course of life; and, by despising *thee*, to show disregard to the Divine Master whom thou servest. He is disappointed of his hope. God makes him to work *good;* leaving to him the awful responsibility of his will to work evil. You have benefited by his enmity; for you have drawn nearer to your God. Your aim is heaven; and no lower consideration, whether of good or ill, can divert an aim, whose object, here, is Peace; hereafter, Glory. The sting of all unkindness is drawn, when received in this spirit of Christian courage; because the feeling of *individual* wrong is withdrawn. An enemy strikes a blow at our good name, perhaps, or our worldly advancement. His object is to give pain. *Faith* is our shield to quench this fiery dart. We believe, that though he hurls the dart for our harm, a greater than he shall direct it for our good. Wisely looking higher than our individual wrong, we repose, in faith, upon "that goodness," which God "hath prepared for them who love him, even before the sons of men." We can ever appeal to that Being in the firm language of David—"Thou shalt hide us privily by thine own presence from the provoking of all men: thou shalt keep us secretly in thy tabernacle, from the strife of tongues."

Thus restored to health of body and of soul, you go on your way rejoicing. Do enemies beset you in your new path of life. Do they daily provoke—challenge you, as it were, to anger, or hatred, or

[1] Ps. lxxvi. 10.

ill-will, or any other sin? They tempt in vain. You have found a hiding-place; even the love of your Father, who is in heaven, and the mercy of your Saviour, and the comfort of your Sanctifier. In that hiding-place you remain safely. The evil-speaker, the backbiter, the slanderer, the reviler, may persevere in their baseness. But there is no offence taken, consequently no retort given; no railing for railing—no "*strife* of tongues." Leaving *them* to the misery of their own hearts, *you* persevere in your patience, and God permits you to find with *Him* rest, and a peace of mind which "passeth all understanding." By faith you have at length overcome the world. Nay, you have achieved a nobler triumph still—you have overcome yourself.

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## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

### PERSEVERANCE.

THERE are few qualities more valuable than decision of character—an inflexible resolution to maintain the course of action we have upon principle adopted. To the Christian this is indispensable towards his final perseverance. There is no other source, however, of the courage upon which it depends than Religion—a pervading sense of our covenanted relation to God, through Jesus Christ. The Apostles, whilst they exemplified this virtue in their lives, urge it in their writings with all the eloquence of truth, and all the fervour of inspiration. If *they* found it needful, *we* cannot dispense with it. To you, indeed, it would seem now of primary importance. With you every day probably will call it into action; because, having resolved to "lead a new life[1]" before God and man,

[1] See page 194.

you will need all your resolution to persevere against false shame on your own part; against the ridicule of the wicked; and the temptations of those principalities and powers, and the rulers of the "darkness of this world," who are continually trying the souls of men, whether they be faithful. Were you to confine your observance of a religious conduct to the more solemn occasions of religious duty, the call for courage would not be so great; but when you start afresh in your Christian path, with a resolution, that, by God's grace, you will make *a conscience of every thing;* will endeavour to see the hand of God in every dispensation of his providence, and hold yourself responsible to Him for *every* part of your conduct in civil, social, and domestic life, you will find that St. Paul did not adopt too strong language, when he compared such a course to a constant warfare; an unceasing struggle[1]; and that our blessed Lord might well teach us, that no such ease must mark his followers' onward course, as would lay them open to surprise. "What I say unto you, I say unto all, *Watch.*" Your Christian courage must be a uniform principle—not an effort, but a habit. The Apostle expresses the truth very felicitously, "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ;"—so imitate, upon all occasions, the graces which marked Him in his human nature, that all men shall know you to be his disciples[2]. Nor must you ever forget, that a Christian's life, in all its bearings towards his Creator and his fellow-creatures, is a "life hid with Christ in

[1] 2 Tim. iv. 7.

[2] Rom. xiii. 14. Chrysostom tells us, that it was a common and familiar expression in his day, when any individual closely imitated another—"He has put him on." The expression is frequently used by St. Paul in the same sense.—"Put on the new man." "Put on the whole armour of God." "Put on charity." Nay, even when a hypocrite renders to the excellence of any Christian grace the unwilling evidence of his testimony, by assuming the appearance, yet is uninfluenced by the power of it—whether of humility before God, or of charity before men—it is commonly said, "He puts on the virtue."

God[1]"—a life, therefore, often of silent and hidden, but always of lofty motives. To a worldly eye, which confines its view to this mortal state, and to a worldly mind, which grovels under the dread of man's judgment, they are silent and hidden; for, being spiritual, they can be discerned only spiritually; but they are open as the day, and eloquent as the uttered prayer, to that heart-searching God, with whom the Christian ever walks, as with the God of final judgment; and they are lofty, as well becometh an immortal soul, whose aim is to *please* the MOST HIGH in this *life*, and to *dwell* with Him for ever in the *next*[2].

I am aware that, in looking for a religious motive, and a religious sanction, in what appear merely the common transactions of life between man and man, great care must be taken not to bear ourselves *irreverently* towards the SUPREME! The Divine warning to Moses must be duly heeded by us, *whenever* we approach in prayer to the eternal God! "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is *holy* ground." Every worldly affection must carefully be removed from our heart, ere we can hopefully approach the holy presence of the Almighty[3]. Whether good or ill betide us; whether prosperity or

[1] Col. iii. 3.

[2] How effectively does St. Paul use this argument! Called to defend himself and others, the ministers of the Gospel, against the false imputations cast upon them, as to their motives; whilst he fearlessly stands forth their spirited champion, he answers for himself, with all the scorn merited by his slanderers, and with all the honest indignation natural to an honourable mind, casting back the contumely of baser minds. What though, as ministers of Christ, and followers of the meek and lowly Jesus, having taken up the cross of self-denial, they did patiently endure the contradiction of sinners: "bearing all things, believing all things, hoping all things!"—were they, *therefore*, to be held of mean and grovelling spirit? Were they, *therefore*, to be met by scorn and obloquy? But if they were, their motive sustained them. "But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing by myself: yet am I not hereby justified: but *he* that *judgeth me is the Lord*." 1 Cor. iv. 3, 4.

[3] See the Note in page 89.

adversity be our portion; one feeling must predominate—unshrinking submission to the Divine will. "It is the Lord! let *him* do what seemeth him good." We must not irreverently measure his love by the afflictions or the blessings of this life; but by faith learn to act irrespectively of this world's ordering; for of a truth, there "is here often one event to the righteous, and to the wicked." Does not "the same God make his sun to shine on the evil and on the good?" Nay, sometimes there *appears* even an inversion of that moral order, which we are sure it must be the will of God to enforce, and the subversion of which has ever been an obstacle in the way of those who carry not their view beyond man's present state of existence. But this fact is not only allowed by the Christian; it is adduced as one amongst other proofs, that there will be a *future* day of retribution. The end is not yet. This apparent anomaly, therefore, strengthens faith in a *final* judgment, and adds another motive to a steady, uniform perseverance. God being confessedly good and just, and "having pleasure in the prosperity of his servants;" "his mercy reaching unto the heavens, and his faithfulness unto the clouds, and his righteousness standing like the strong mountains"—it is clear, that if the principles of right *seem* to be violated in *this* life, they will be for ever established in the *next*: if the Divine mercy appear withdrawn, God is but more severely trying our faith and patience, that He may more fully and more "openly reward it[1]." Justice shall finally prevail; and under that conviction, in proportion as we draw near and more near to our heavenly Father, we shall approach with more and more reverence; leaving events to Him, and viewing all things as either directed or permitted by Him. A truth this, in proof of which no argument of man's wisdom is required. The voice of God declares that "all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of

[1] Matt. vi. 18.

Him with whom we have to do:" and since, "by our words we shall be justified, and by our words we shall be condemned," we understand, with sufficient clearness, that no part of conduct can be considered by a wise man as a matter of indifference. For though such is the immensity of God's power, such the unimaginable greatness which surrounds Him; filling equally all space, sustaining with equal care and equal power the worlds which He has created, and the lowliest insect which creeps therein, that the mind is lost in the contemplation of his awful majesty: yet, as "his ways are not our ways, so neither are his thoughts our thoughts:" extent and magnitude are as nothing in his sight. Whilst He ruleth in all the kingdoms of the world, empires in their rise and fall unconsciously fulfilling his will; suns and their systems rolling their courses through space, showing his handy-work and his guiding and sustaining power: whilst "He *humbleth himself* to behold even the things of *heaven*[1]."—Not a sparrow falleth to the ground, but He noteth it: not a hair of our head perisheth, but it is known to Him. How much more then shall the soul of each individual, in its spiritual and eternal interests, be his care[2]! The practical inference to be drawn from

[1] Ps. cxiii. 5.

[2] How beautifully does our Church in her Communion service, lead us to draw comfort from this feeling of an *indiridual* interest in the care of our Redeemer, God! How strikingly does she impress the sentiment upon the heart of *each* communicant! Was the blood of Christ shed for all men, that it might "cleanse from all sin?" So was it shed for you, and for me, and for each individual, however lowly in station or humble in spirit. And who ever heard the words—"the body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for *thee*"—"the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was shed for *thee*"—who ever heard these words unmoved? As on bended knee, and with lowly heart, they received the blessed elements at the Lord's table, and applied to themselves the gracious truth which those words convey, comfort was shed abroad in every heart. *Each* suppliant joyfully responded in spirit, if not in words—"For *me!*"—"For *me* did the Lord of heaven die?" "Am *I* to share fully and freely in that his full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, which he made for the sins of the *whole world?*" Into the heart thus impressed with wonder and

these considerations is, that no part of human conduct either in motive or in act, is so minute as to escape the notice of the same omniscient and omnipotent God; but that every action, every word, every thought of man should be carefully ordered according to the Divine law, inasmuch as upon their right ordering in this life depends his woe or his bliss in the next. Hence your anxious care to make a conscience now of every thing: living as unto God[1]. Hence, too, the resolve, "in *all* thy ways to acknowledge Him," with a well-grounded hope, "that he will direct thy paths," and lead thee by the appointed way, the road to heaven.

In duly regulating this strict and minute view of Christian duty, we shall be much assisted by searching those Scriptures, whence alone we can draw *true* wisdom[2]. In them, especially in the discourses of our blessed Lord—we find safe guidance in every difficulty; sure counsel for every doubt. In the present case, all difficulty is removed, all doubt solved, by his own illustration of the point in question; an illustration which indeed exhibits a matchless union of the deepest wisdom with the clearest instruction—"The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the *whole* was leavened[3]." Does the leaven, which one putteth into meal, so pervade every particle of it, that the *whole* is leavened? yet is no eye able to detect its presence, save by its effects?—So is it with a truly Christian life. There is no part of it uninfluenced by Christian principle: yet no eye shall find, in one action, an adherence to the law of Christ; in another, a disregard of it. The same sense of religious duty, which bears us each Sabbath to worship the Lord in

gratitude, the happy truth sinks deep; full of power; and the love of God pours around all its radiance of peace and joy. Yes! the body and blood of Christ were offered, even for *thee!* See the Note in page 124.

[1] Refer to page 205. [2] See chapter ix. [3] Matt. xiii. 33.

the beauty of holiness, in the courts of his house, and boldly *there* confess that "the Lord, *he* is the God;" and that "in his sight no man living can be justified;" that we are, before Him, "unworthy servants;" "miserable sinners[1];" saved only by his grace—the same sense of duty renders us bold, when, in active life, we are called to avow a religious principle, and evidence a religious practice. We deny ourselves; we brave reproach; we are patient under contumely; and endure even the contradiction of sinners. As the leaven "leaveneth the whole lump," so religion influences the *whole* conduct; as in the congregation, so in the world, not ostentatiously, but effectively.

That your perseverance fail not in such a course, requires, therefore, all your courage. But you have learned to sustain that courage by no worldly motives, which might fail you; by no temporal considerations, which were unworthy the cause you have engaged in—you sustain it by looking up *to Him*, who has brought you out of all your trouble; to Him who hath redeemed your life from the grave, and your soul from death; before *Him* you resolve to walk in the light of the living; in his constant presence you delight to feel yourself. He your companion and guide, you move, even in the midst of temptation, unharmed; you persevere in holiness, because you serve, and love, and walk with a holy God. He heard your cry in your sickness: in health *you* hear *Him*. You openly confess Him before men, because you habitually look forward to that solemn hour, when you hope—humbly, but firmly hope—that He will confess you before an assembled creation, and the glorious angels in heaven. Thus you arm afresh your courage; thus you nerve your heart against the evils and trials of this life; and "praying always with all prayer and supplication in

[1] Who can forbear recognizing and acknowledging, in the humble language of our Liturgy, the pervading influence of the Spirit of the meek and lowly Jesus? Refer to chapter xxv.

the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance [1], you strive so to live unto God here on earth, that you may live with Him for ever in heaven!

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## CHAPTER XXXIX.

### OLD AGE.

Few things are more wonderful in the history of the human mind, than its eager *anticipation* of events, the end of which it dreads. Man dreads death, towards which all events in the flow of time hasten him: yet has he a restless desire to change the present for the future. And this holds true, through every gradation of age and circumstances. Children, we long for the joyous days of boyhood. The boy, with eager hopes, looks to the season when he shall be engaged in the concerns of active life. And no sooner does one, in full strength, find himself successful in the world's race, than in striving for the goal, he anxiously carries his view to the calm of retirement, where old age may overtake him in the enjoyment of a well-earned competence:—for thus fancy pictures the scene—no cares to molest; no anxieties to disturb; no disappointments to vex him. As age creeps on, he trusts to live longer and longer: yet still he fears *that*, in which age must close—*Death*. I know but one way of rendering every stage of human life at once safe and happy; and that is, by taking in each, the appointed guidance of the word of God, and the promised comfort of the Spirit of God; and fixing our hopes on a future world. Where man confines his view to this lower world; its wealth or power, its hopes or fears; each step he takes does but add to care. There is always some still distant point, which he is

[1] Eph. vi. 13.

striving to attain: yet no sooner is it reached, than another, and another, succeeds: till when, like the mountain traveller, he has surmounted many an intervening eminence, the evening of life overshadows him ere his object be accomplished, and the glories, in the expectation of witnessing which he had nerved his strength for the toilsome ascent, are lost in clouds and darkness—the summit is not gained. How different with him, who amid all the successive changes has walked with his God! A firmness of purpose has kept him unperplexed in his course. He too has experienced all the changes and chances of this mortal life—but in each he has taken the appointed Guide and Comforter. He too has toiled onward, and upward—but even though wealth and honour may be his well-earned portion, the world has no eminence so high as to *satisfy* his ambition. His aim is far above the mountain-steep of worldly honour, fame, or joy. He "looketh to the hills whence cometh his salvation." His aim is heaven. From that lofty height alone he expects to behold at his feet the clouds of worldly sorrow and the storms of human passion; whilst in this lower state he enjoys the calm brightness of the Sun of Righteousness, and the cheering consolations of the Comforter. Nor are his hopes vain. If, indeed, amid the pains and infirmities which naturally attend lengthened life, patience occasionally wearies, and hope is sometimes clouded; that weariness is soon removed; that cloud soon dispersed. Faith hears the cheering voice of a heavenly Father—"Even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry and deliver you." Sustained by this promise, he goes on his way rejoicing. He ascends higher and higher towards the spiritual mount; till he dieth, as Moses, in the sight of the land of promise, and gains at last that "rest, which remaineth for the people of God."

Old Age has perhaps thus now overtaken *you*, and finds you a patient pilgrim on your way to heaven.

Religion has effected that, which the world had failed to effect: it has enabled you to pass from the busy bustle of active manhood, to the calmer season of age, at peace with God, your neighbour, and yourself. Grateful for the past, hopeful for the future, and strong in faith, that the God with whom you walk, will be your refuge, your defence, your guide, you look fearlessly to the approach of death; trusting that the great Disposer of events will order it wisely and mercifully for you.

Nor will the season of Old Age drag on heavily with you. Not because to the learned, whose minds are stored with human wisdom, memory must ever open a rich source of intellectual improvement and interest, but because to unlearned alike and learned, are open those inexhaustible treasures of *Divine* wisdom, which the Bible offers freely to *all*. The learned of the sons of men do indeed there find ample resource for the leisure of age. Tracing the wondrous histories of nations and of individuals; studying "the great mystery of godliness," in its "length, and breadth, and depth, and height;" the noblest intellect, the most cultivated mind, the highest talents, and the most extensive acquirements, still find full exercise for their various powers; one truth flowing from another; as from a perennial fountain, unexhausted and inexhaustible—that fountain, God. But its doctrines strike home to the sympathies of *all;* and its rules of life stand prominent in all their sublime simplicity; plain to be apprehended by the lowest grade of intellect, yet acknowledged even by the highest to be Divine: rules of life, involving a principle of action, needful for the right ordering of life, equally in the prince and the peasant. Nor will you in this your season of old age, as you are engaged in meditating upon the great truths revealed in the holy Scriptures, whether you be rich or poor, great or lowly, learned or unlearned, fail to remember that the same wondrous Being, of whose marvellous great power and infinite love you there

read, is *your* God!—that He has been to *you* also, marvellous in his dealings through a long life: crowning his mercies by bringing you at last to full age—your Father and Redeemer; your Guide and Comforter.

As thus your thoughts are filled holily and happily, old age itself has no day too long for you; every hour passes in a calm hope, which, like an autumn sun, as the shadows lengthen, mildly cheers the evening of your journey. You "walk with your God," and your path is peace. As you retire each night to rest, you are reminded, but without fear, of the hour when your body must tenant the grave; and you close your eyes in sleep, even as you humbly hope to close them at the hour of death, in firm reliance upon the sure protection of the Almighty to raise you again to life—here to a life of peace, hereafter to a life of glory. And each morning when you wake, though your existence now *seems* to preclude you from worldly usefulness, you will wake not impatient under your infirmities, but rather rejoicing that your light never perhaps shone more brightly before men, to the glory of God, than when you now exhibit in your life a watchful preparation for another and a better world: in patience possessing your soul, thankful to be yet a sojourner here, and spiritually adding strength to strength—till "through the grave, and gate of death, you pass to your glorious resurrection[1]," when you trust to "awake up, after the likeness" of your Saviour and your God, and live to his glory for ever[2].

[1] The Collect for Easter Even.

[2] Ps. xvii. 16.

## CHAPTER XL.

### CONSOLATIONS OF AGE.

It were difficult to imagine a nobler object for our contemplation, than the aged Christian, crowned with righteousness, and calmly awaiting his summons to the eternal world. In the mean time, whilst life is spared, he exhibits in his whole demeanour the appropriate graces of a cheerful resignation under infirmities, a watchful hope for future mercies, and an abiding sense of gratitude for mercies past. By a meek and uniform spirit of resignation under the various ills he endures, and the several deprivations which lie heavy upon him, he at once adorns and benefits society. Around him flock youth and manhood, joying to learn wisdom from his experience, and by contemplating in him the more winning features of Christian character led almost imperceptibly to imitate what they admire. As his spirit is seen to triumph over ill, by an uniform acquiescence in the Divine dispensations, without murmur, or impatience, or repining, and in a calm endurance of every affliction, whether of mind, body, or estate,—he stands forth, the Christian hero. Those who surround him, pay him honour. Nay, much more frequently than may meet the world's eye, he is the means of calling into activity virtue itself; he gives to the timid the courage of companionship, pours fresh animation upon the struggling efforts of the zealous, and upholds the cause of holiness and truth with the silent but prevailing eloquence of example. As memory brings to him sweet consolations in retracing the goodness of God to himself through a long and varied life, he not only delights to cherish in his own heart gratitude for the past—he is solicitous to cherish in the hearts of others faith and hope for the future. The young, as they catch the

instructive narrative of temptations bravely resisted; of bad habits successfully broken; of worldly sorrows removed or lightened; of spiritual griefs soothed and changed into joy; of disappointments ending in blessing; of evil courses long borne with, and at last changed—and all acknowledged to be the gracious gift of God, whose grace was no sooner sought, than found powerful, "to the pulling down of strongholds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ"—as the young catch these truths from the lips of old age, calm, pious, and wise; every worldly passion subdued, every spiritual grace triumphant—they are insensibly won to approve and adopt principles, whose fruit is thus evidenced as Peace[1]. And the aged righteous may well have the courage to be sincere; they have but little to fear from a world which is passing away from them; and they have every thing to hope from the world, towards which every hour sees them approach nearer and nearer. It is true that age has its drawbacks, even to the truly religious; but they are far more than counterbalanced by the hopes and graces which a Christian spirit supplies. Suppose the aged unable to mingle, as in former days, in the permitted activity of worldly business—he rejoices, that no call of duty requiring him for the concerns of this lower world, he is free to devote all his energies to thoughts of another and a better, and henceforth "passing the time of his sojourning here in fear," duly to prepare him for his end. To this nobler object his exclusive attention may now be given, and like the patriarch of old, he may "walk with God." Nor for a moment does he regret pleasures, of which now he cannot partake. He has found that the world never afforded, in youth and strength, pleasures so unalloyed as hours of age and infirmity have brought

[1] Heb. xii. 14. James iii. 18.

him. Young and old indeed equally find of Religion, that "her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace;" but in age this pleasure brings more of peace: for it is more out of the reach of the world; less interrupted by its necessary occupations, less embittered by its cares and sorrows. Whilst the near prospect of death, which to the wicked and the irreligious constitutes the chief drawback to peace in old age, is to the good man the great soother of what cares still may press upon him; is itself the great argument by which he is enabled to sustain his fortitude under the ills of this present life. Is death near? His sorrows must soon close. As for his enemies, "their love and their *hatred*, and their *envy*, is already perished[1]:"—he will soon be out of the reach of enmity; and the pleasures which he now rejoices in as he walketh in rich pastures of spiritual food by the

[1] The reader is referred to a Note upon this passage, p. 139. To the observations there made, may be added the striking consideration, that when the Son of God submitted Himself to the will of his enemies, the secret spring of their hatred and injustice proved to be *Envy*. They hated Him for his very excellences; the brightness of which, rendered dazzling by the contrasted darkness of their sinful hearts, they could not patiently endure. Was no guile found in his mouth? Was every action marked with perfect benevolence? Did his discourses tend to promote good-will and charity towards men in all the varied relations of life? Was his anxiety for his country's welfare so tender as to call forth tears of anguish in the prospect of its overthrow? Did He obey her laws? Did He so love her people that He died for them? All these things, in proportion as they le, upon the minds of men in general, and influenced them in his favon excited the bitter hatred of his enemies. It maddened them to ur, "all Jerusalem" go after Him. The quiet influence of his teachsee the deep impression made upon the thoughtful by his doctrines ng, the unostentatious yet effective working of his example, thoughand combined to draw from the coward-hearted judge who condehey Him to death, the self-accusing confession of injustice—"I fined *fault* in him,"—were so many serpent stings to the hearts no accusers. "They *delivered* Him for *Envy!*" his

Dreadful indeed is a passion, thus fatal in its exercise; subv of justice and charity in all man's dealings with his fellow-cre sive as well in public as in private life. The slanderer and the m ures, alike find it the motive for their sin. lerer

With what watchful care should we *avoid* the *first* stirring f this baneful feeling!

waters of comfort shall be exchanged for those immortal "pleasures which are at God's right hand for evermore."

If it happen ever, that a cloud of fear pass over his soul, he flies to the consolations of memory. He calls to mind the years that are past; he remembers some season of trial, when in dismay and anguish at the prospect before him, he felt with the mourning patriarch—"All these things are against me [1]." He remembers, also, that God mercifully either removed the trial, or mitigated it, or gave him strength to bear it. Nay, he can even trace some present blessing to that very season of sorrow. He therefore casts away fear. The noble reflection of David instantly springs

[1] Gen. xlii. 36.

There are few portions of sacred history more deeply interesting to the aged, than that of the patriarch Jacob. His life was, for the greater part, marked with perilous adventure, or striking incident. The transfer to him of his elder brother's inheritance; his flight from the house and land of his fathers; his sojourn in a distant country; his varied condition during that period; the unlooked for restraint by the hand of Heaven upon the anger of Laban and the envy of Esau, who both sought him, that they might "smite and do him hurt;" his hair-breadth escape on those occasions, calling forth alternately his prudence and his courage, his fears and his hopes, the evident and signal protection he enjoyed in the watchful care and superintending providence of God; the Divine blessings which subsequently attended him, till Joseph's exaltation in Egypt afforded him the long looked-for rest; "giving beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness *," bringing his grey hairs with *honour* to the grave—these events are not pondered without exciting the deepest interest, and affording the most powerful instruction. Jacob lived long, and saw every sorrow end in joy—every trial in blessing. Did he *then* say, "All these things are against me?" He then doubtless rather acknowledged, that "the Lord, he is alone the God;" great, merciful, and gracious: his ways, and his times, and his thoughts, not as man's, though ever lovingly directed to man's good. We, short-sighted, look only to the present; He, to the end. And as age corrects the erring judgment of youth with respect to the ordering of God's providence, so will a future state give, even to the aged, a still clearer view of the same truth; evidencing of the Divine dealings towards the sons of men, that "all *his* ways are right."

* Isa. lxi. 3.

to his heart. "This is my *infirmity!* I will remember the years that are past, and call to mind the wonders of old time: I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most Highest." And where is he who can look back upon his past life, without tracing there the mercy of his God? It is God, who by his providence has preserved us day by day, from the moment of birth, even to this present hour. Through all the perilous seasons of infancy and youth He has upheld us. To whom can we now trace our escape from impending dangers, our deliverance from accumulated evil, our extrication from various difficulties and distresses, in mind, body, and estate, when healthful and strong we engage in the full tide of human affairs, but to Him, in whom we now rejoice, as in the God of our old age? We look back as a traveller, who, having reached some hill, whence he views his happy home, and anticipates the welcome there awaiting him, turns himself, and surveys the long tract of country he has passed over, wondering how he escaped its dangers, and endured his toils, but glad at last to near his rest. We acknowledge, that "the goodness of God hath followed us all the days of our life."

Happy the aged, if crowned with righteousness!—Unequal to activity in worldly duties, he wisely turns with more exclusive diligence to the working out salvation for his immortal soul[1]. The pleasures of the world vainly now allure him; but he repines not: all his aim now is, to attain those "pleasures which are at God's right hand for evermore." What if infirmities bow him down? They will soon cease, and be to him as though they had never been, except for the trial of faith they have afforded him in this scene of probation. Death would fain terrify him! But his trust is in One who conquered death for him; and will supply courage to meet those terrors. It is thus that, after a life well spent in Christian

[1] Phil. ii. 12.

activity, the aged Christian blesses and is blessed. He excites the young to a worthy emulation of his virtues and graces; stimulating them by his example, guiding them by his wisdom, and encouraging them by his experience; till, wise in heavenly wisdom, and good in heavenly piety; watchful and provident for his own eternal interests, a humble but sincere benefactor of his fellow-creatures, and a promoter of the honour of his God—he advances to a higher, and a holier, and a happier state; in patience, as in faith unwearied[1]; and waiting "all the days of his appointed time, until his change come[2]."

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## CHAPTER XLI.

### SICKNESS UNTO DEATH.

YEARS have rolled on, and at length comes a sickness unto death. You are convinced that from your present sickness there will be *no* recovery; and that your earthly course is well nigh run. With this conviction, what new feelings rush upon the soul! Every thought is now directed to the future world opening upon you! If you be found watching for your Lord, blessed are you[3]! The calm of righteous age has been the harbinger of a calm close to it. And your whole heart is set upon another world! "Your life is hid with Christ in God[4]," and your humble trust is, that with God you may find that life—even life eternal.

But it may happen that some who open these pages, are not found so watching. Upon them, perhaps, the sickness has fallen, not only with the conviction that there will be no recovery from it, but with the awful feeling of unpreparedness for the close of it. What

[1] Tit. ii. 2.
[2] Job xiv. 14.
[3] Luke xii. 37.
[4] Col. iii. 3.

new views then open upon you, my reader!—new views of the past, the present, and the future.

As you look back, and meditate upon the years which are *past*, former sins, which in their commission you either thought trifling, and disregarded as needing no repentance; or which, if at the time viewed with fear, were too soon blotted from your remembrance, now array themselves against you in all their fearful responsibility. Once held harmless, they now wound sharper than a serpent's sting. Even your "negligences and ignorances [1]," the remembrance of which had long slept, now awake to reprove and torment you. You know, that though *you* may have forgotten, God does not so forget. You know, further, that *He* will judge you, not only for those sins which were directed more immediately against Himself—dishonouring his Name, neglecting his Word, forsaking his Sabbaths, slighting his Ordinances, disregarding his Worship, grieving his Spirit—He views the offences of which you have wilfully been guilty towards your fellow-creatures, as sins committed against Himself. *Their* cause He makes *his own:* whether in reward for good, or recompense for evil [2]. How stands your conscience with respect to all these? Experience proves, that never does the recollection of them, whether they be sins against God, or offences against our neighbour—never does the least of them, unless sincerely repented of—escape the memory of the dying.

"Judge yourself, that you be not judged of the Lord." Has Sabbath-breaking been the sin of your

[1] Well does our Church direct us to pray Almighty God to forgive us, not only our sins, but "our negligences and ignorances."—See the Litany, and page 138.

[2] In the wondrous scene which Christ Himself depicted, of the day of Judgment, we find the supreme Judge thus determining severally the sentence of condemnation, and the award of approval. In the one case—"Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the *least* of these my *brethren*, ye have done it unto *me*." In the other—"Inasmuch as ye did it *not* to one of the least of these, ye did it *not* to *me*." Matt. xxv. 40. 45.

health? Have you habitually desecrated the day by worldly business, or debased it by worldly pleasure, or in the pride of self-will kept it as a day of *unhallowed* rest, in idleness at your home, and disregarded its call to the house of your God? And does anguish fill your soul? In this your last sickness—your last season for repentance—give what proof you can of sincerity as a penitent, not only by confessing to God your sin and your sorrow, but by warning others, lest they also pursue the same evil course, and share your misery by partaking in your sin. Tell the *young*, more especially, how gladly now, were health and strength yours, you would attend the courts of the Lord's house, and praise his name *there*, and honour his day, and esteem no earthly consideration sufficient excuse for the neglect of a duty so holy and so happy. Warn *them*, that as a youth of sin brings an old age of sorrow, so *no* sin so completely hardens a man as sabbath-breaking. It perils the soul, equally by the indifference to which it gives rise, with respect to its own eternal welfare, and the open defiance of God's law to which it leads [1]. It wilfully closes those

[1] Many fall into error by fancying that, if they abstain from those flagrant sins and offences, which mark the course of openly wicked men, they have attained spiritual safety. Not so are we taught by the word of God. *That* assures us that indifference and carelessness peril the soul, as surely as the more active sins. Witness the memorable and startling warning to the Church at Laodicea—a Church sunken in indifference and carelessness:—"I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth*." Witness too the end of the slothful servant, who thought because he had neither purloined nor diminished his master's goods, that if he were to lose the meed of praise, he at least was not open to blame. What availed him to have cautiously laid up in a napkin the pound entrusted to him†? He was a slothful careless servant; and in his sloth and in his carelessness he was doomed to punishment. Alas, then, for those who think it a matter of indifference whether they hallow the sabbaths and keep the ordinances, and fancy themselves at liberty to choose whether or not they will serve the Lord.

* Rev. iii. 15, 16. † Luke xix. 20.

avenues to the understanding and the heart by which righteous thoughts might enter, and having found entrance, might by grace abide; it slights as a thing of nought, the promised blessing of Divine grace upon the assembling of ourselves together; and by disdaining those holy ordinances which the Almighty Himself has been pleased to appoint as the means of sanctifying our souls in life, especially grieves his Holy Spirit[1]. All these truths now rush upon your soul like a flood. Your understanding is convinced by them; your heart confesses them in all their force. Avow then, unflinchingly, your convictions and your feelings. This your solemn hour is no season for dissembling. You know not how much of good may accrue to others from your warning, raised as it is with a sincerity which none can doubt in one on the brink of the eternal world. "Behold," you will say, "behold in me a witness to the blessed truth which came from heaven, that 'whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth.' For many a long year, in health and strength, I heeded not religion, cared not for my soul, thought not of eternity. I went wrong; and I *began* my evil course of error by *sabbath-breaking*. But now I know God's ways, that *they* have been righteous, and just, and true; and *my own* ways, that they have been altogether evil. Sickness and affliction have been sanctified to me; bringing conviction of my once outcast sinful state, allaying the fiery temper of my heart, and subduing it to receive the mild and gracious influences of the Spirit of grace. All my impulses, by nature only evil continually, are now curbed, and by grace directed aright. I fear sin; and I fear hell. I love God; and I long for rest with Him in heaven. Surely, then, I may rejoice in afflictions in this life, when by Divine mercy they prepare me for happiness in the next."—Thus to declare your own unworthiness, and the Lord's unde-

[1] To avoid repetition upon this point, the reader is referred to the 17th and following chapters upon the "Sabbath."

served forbearance and goodness towards you: thus to avow your own sinfulness, and exalt the merits of your Saviour, as its atonement,—thus to confess Christ before men, leads to no presumptuous hope that He will also confess you before men and angels.

Or have you been unjust towards your *neighbour* in *thought*, *word*, or *deed?* Surely the misery of that injustice hath now recoiled upon yourself. If in your *thought* you have judged others wrongfully, conscience bids you consider, how you will yourself stand *his* judgment, who will search the depths of your heart, and who declares that "with the same judgment ye mete to others, it shall be measured to you again." Have your lips spoken evil *words* of your neighbour[1]? If you have been guilty of slandering his fair fame; a backbiter, a tale-bearer, a whisperer; separating very friends; if you have of malice been the disturber of his peace by false insinuations, dealing to him with your tongue other measure than you would he should have dealt to you—your worst enemy might pity you. There you lie, sick and afflicted; this world, in which you have done him the injury, passing from you, and the next, where you must answer for those "*idle* words"—which once you held so trifling—opening to receive you: and your conscience even now so reproaching you with your cruel conduct, that you would willingly bear all the pain you made him to suffer, if you could either forget the sin which caused it, or recall the slander which your lying tongue

[1] Our Church wisely takes especial heed to this important part of Christian duty; and early trains her sons to the observance of it. In the full and striking exposition of a Christian's duty towards his neighbour, which is so clearly and so wisely laid down by her in the Catechism, she expresses herself very strongly upon the point. Our duty is—"to hurt nobody by *word* or *deed*; to be *true* and *just* in *all* our dealings; to bear no *malice* nor hatred in our *heart*." And who shall wonder at the parental anxiety with which she teaches the youthful Christian to guard the "heart with all diligence:" for "those things which proceed out of the mouth," saith our Lord, "come forth from the *heart*, and *they* defile the man." Matt. xv. 18. Also Prov. v. 23.

has proclaimed to a listening world, and which that world has echoed afar. Have you injured your neighbour in *deed?* And is this injury, like the last, that for which you are all unable to give recompense? Alas! you have fallen into the pit that you dug for others. You injured them, but you have more deeply injured yourself. You doubtless expected, by thought, word, or deed, to exalt yourself, and lower them, and great seemed your triumph. But who triumphs now? The evil you inflicted upon *them* will not only pass away, but will turn to their good [1], by aiding to wean them from a world, which your malice has tended to render distasteful to them: whilst against you it rises with accumulated force, in a rushing tide of remorse, gathering fresh strength, as every hour bears you onward to that eternity, where you must render your account before the tribunal of God.

If these have been thy sins towards thy God, these thy offences towards thy neighbour, and they be *unrepented of;* wonder not that the remembrance of them now rises up against thee [2]. "Sin did lie at the door;" as it did with Cain [3], and though for a while it rose not up against thee, it was only dormant. You may endeavour to escape the recollection of what it is convenient for your peace of conscience to forget; but "be sure your sin will find you out." Arouse thee, then, ere it be too late, and no longer close your eyes, either to the existence of these sins and offences, or to their danger. No longer attempt to conceal from yourself what you cannot conceal from your God. Yet despair not. God forbid! *Repent!*—Thanks to the mercy of the Most High, as often as the question arises in the terrified heart of the convinced sinner —"What must I do to be saved?" so often arises the ready answer—an answer in which the Spirit of God Himself speaks peace and hope to the soul—"Believe

[1] Matt. xii. 37.
[2] See page 198.
[3] Gen. iv. 7. Numb. xxxii. 23.

in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved[1]" —for your belief is no longer a mere profession, but a living principle; evidencing itself by unfeigned sorrow, by a deep self-abasement, by a hatred of the sin, the very recollection of which is your torment, a full and unreserved confession to Almighty God[2], with a turning of the whole heart to Him, under a newly awakened sense of his love and his forbearance, his mercy and his power. Apply to your own individual case the glorious truth, which the word of Him in whom you thus believe teaches you; and if you truly mourn and forsake your sins, let the firm language of St. John be the language of your heart—"'I have sinned'—and no longer will I, in my folly, attempt to conceal from myself the danger of that sin, which I cannot conceal from God. But though a sinner, I hope for pardon, because I repent through Jesus Christ, who hath died, and become the propitiation for my sins. And as 'his blood cleanseth from *all* sin,' I can never doubt but that it will cleanse *me* from *mine*. Now I know indeed the value of a Saviour; now I indeed prize the blessed truth, so long and often thought lightly of, that 'whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.' True it is—I feel and I confess the feeling—that as 'before I was in trouble I went wrong, but now at length I know *God's* ways;' so I owe this happy change to the merciful dispensation of my Heavenly Father. He saw me wandering far from the strait and narrow path which leadeth unto life, and, having compassion upon me, He rendered my course of sin and indifference heavy and painful, by sending sickness and sorrow; and merciful is this pause in my earthly cares, though the pause may bring me to my grave. God loved my soul, and He has chastened me, that I might myself wisely have a heed to

[1] Acts xvi. 31.

[2] 1 John i. 9. "If we *confess* our sins, *he* is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." Refer to page 119, and the note there.

its welfare[1]. I now see clearly, that Christ is alone the way, and the truth, and the life; and that the part of his followers is to repent, and to believe, and to obey; and so have hope of pardon and of peace."

Are these your reflections now? these the confessions of your heart on a dying bed? said I not then aright, that you view, with far other thoughts than when in health, the *present* time, which God graciously spares to you; and that you retrace the *past*, with wonder at his forbearance, and amazement at his love?—New views have indeed opened upon you.

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## CHAPTER XLII.

### FUTURITY.

If you be thus startled into an awakened view of your *past* life and your *present* state, it is the prospect of the *future* which has roused you. You feel that your sickness is unto death; and you know from God's word, that, "after death comes the judgment." However you might, in health, have pretended a disbelief of this truth, or an indifference to the consequences of it, you are not bold enough to disbelieve now; and your terrors prove you not indifferent. You are at length convinced, that whilst Divine revelation proclaims the solemn truth, reason itself testifies to it. Even in health you were fain to allow, that all things in the natural world exhibit their Creator to be not only a Being of infinite power to create the wonders by which we are surrounded, and of infinite love in so ordering them, that they all, whether in the heaven above, or on the earth beneath, are uniformly directed to the service of man[2]; but a Being who has so framed

[1] 1 John ii.

[2] See page 63.

and so guides them, that long ages see no disturbance in their course. All is order; for all things obey his will. If then the same Being, when his will is disobeyed in the moral world, corrects not, in this life, the confusion consequent upon such disobedience, it were sheer credulity to imagine that in this life his judgment can be final. That were to believe either that the Creator has no control over his creatures [1], or that a God, infinite in holiness as in power, can leave evil unpunished. Right reason, while it scoffs at imaginations fit only for the fool in his folly, can see clearly, even unaided, that when a good and beneficent Creator permits evil in the present world sometimes to prosper, and virtue sometimes to suffer wrong, there must be a *future* day of recompense, when this moral disorder will be rectified. Suppose, for a moment, that the certainty of final retribution had not been revealed to us in the Holy Scriptures, it were far more difficult to believe that such a Being as God —who must be essentially truth—would suffer falsehood and wrong to prevail, and remain unpunished; than to credit the notion that the same Being—who, if his existence be believed at all, even as a Creator, must be allowed to be infinite in every attribute; infinite, therefore, in goodness, infinite in justice—should reserve to Himself full retribution, till all opportunity of amendment in the wicked should have passed away, and all fear of returning trials should have been removed from the righteous. Nay, the very heathens looked for *final* judgment in the world of *spirits*, whither they felt every human being must

[1] The folly of scepticism on this point is at once exposed by St. Paul, in the triumphant questions—"Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay?" Rom. ix. 20, 21. Yet will man, formed from the dust; man, who hath only that he hath received from Him who formed him, too often set up his weak reason against the word and will of Him from whom he received that reason. Surely the sin of the unbeliever and the sceptic hath not only exceeding sinfulness, but exceeding folly. Rom. vii. 13. Prov. xiv. 9; xxviii. 26.

pass, when the body was subdued by death [1]. Even in their comparative ignorance they were wise enough to know, that if a man can doubt the *truth* of religious hopes, he cannot doubt that they are the natural *remedy* for those weightier afflictions, of which philosophy supplies *no* alleviation; and which can be borne only by other considerations than those which a passing world or the wisdom of man can offer. Add to these deductions of reason, the plain and positive statement of the fact, as revealed to us in the word of God [2], and you will draw the only safe conclusion—that a judgment awaits you, which will be final; a sentence irrevocable; misery or bliss; shame or glory. I trust that you are thus convinced; and that your well-grounded belief in a God of judgment, will lead you to a saving faith in the same God, as a God of mercy and of love.

[1] "If I be in error," said the wise and virtuous heathen, "If I be in error, in believing the immortality of the soul, and the happiness of good men in a future world, I err willingly. The prospect soothes me amid the anxieties of life; nor shall any consideration induce me to forego it."—Cic. de Sen.

[2] I have known men, rendered desperate by a hardened conscience and a long course of sin, madly scoff at the notion of God and judgment; mock against the Saviour, and crucify Him afresh. But this fitful fever, this madness, passed away when health passed away. No sooner have they been brought to a bed of sickness, with the prospect of death, than boldness gave place to terror, scoffing to confession, the hatred of God to the love of Him. How eagerly have they then caught at the promises of pardon, and reconciliation, and peace, which that very book, once scorned, proclaims to them! The Holy Scriptures then have shone, as being verily the word of God; the consolations of the Spirit have been received as in truth the gift of God; and the Saviour has been sought, as indeed the only refuge for the conscience-stricken sinner. The past they have then allowed to be but a vapoury dream of pride! It suited not their worldliness, and their vices, to acknowledge the truth of a revelation which opened to them sure punishment for those sins and offences, which marked their conduct severally to their God and their fellow-creatures; and which, because unpunished in this world, they foolishly flattered themselves would be unpunished for ever.

Men *may* sometimes *live* infidels, sceptics, cavillers; but let us humbly hope, that when the blessed season of sickness intervenes to dispel the gross darkness of sin, they do *not so die!*

What, then, is that *futurity* which is opening upon you? You view it not as heretofore—either with pretended doubt [1], or a cold indifference; with the terror of a convicted heart, or the stern defiance of a reckless mind—you contemplate it with mingled awe and hope; as that state, which your immortal spirit whispers to you is its proper destiny; and in which, as reason and revelation agree in declaring, your woe or your bliss will be sealed for ever.

To contemplate such a state without awe, would indeed argue an insensibility to our own best interests, equally degrading and sinful. Futurity will reveal to us, what is of far more importance to each individual than the fate of empires in this present life—even our own final doom. The eye which closes in death will open either to woe or to bliss unchanging [2]. It were

[1] And is not all doubt as to a future state mere pretence? Is it possible that rational man can contemplate even his own mind, watch its powers, and trace their movements, without being convinced that he is spirit as well as flesh, soul as well as body? And when he looks to this lower world, and observes that its supplies are provided evidently for a perishing body, but affording nothing which can satisfy an unperishing spirit, can he really believe, that he is himself created only for this world?—I have known the strong and the healthy, by a painful effort of hardihood, *profess* that they had not made up their minds about it; but I never knew the dying to doubt of an hereafter, or to deny that "after death comes the judgment."

[2] "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise," was the express declaration of the Saviour to the penitent thief upon the cross. The paradise, indeed, here promised, is the place appointed for the spirits of the just in that new world, to which death passes them, and *not* the final heaven, to which, at the day of judgment, soul and body will alike be admitted. Even the body of Jesus, whilst in spirit He descended to the place of departed spirits, lay in the grave till its appointed time for rising again. Yet this state is evidently a state of happiness: a paradise, wherein spirits repose after the toils of earth, till the body, being raised an immortal and glorified body, shall be created anew, and made a fit habitation for the immortal soul.

It may be observed upon this passage of holy writ, that the example of the penitent thief, calculated as it is to speak encouragement to the truly contrite, is by no means intended to qualify the danger of delay. Before he was brought to the cross, he appears to have been thoroughly acquainted with the leading doctrine of the Gospel—salvation by Jesus Christ, the Son of God; both God and man. Mark his testimony to the faultless Son of *Man*, whose innocence he con-

surely not without a merciful consideration for human infirmity, that our gracious Redeemer, who will Himself be our Judge, has depicted the scene of final judgment with a minuteness so marvellous and awakening, that it almost makes the future present to us. He who will judge us, stands forth as the "Son of man,"—and the manner of the judgment is shown; "the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all his holy angels with him,"—and the principle upon which it will be conducted is declared; the righteous and the wicked shall *then* receive their just recompense of reward; the wicked shall pass to everlasting misery, the righteous unto life eternal. The whole scene is opened before us, and the actors in it are severally portrayed with a force and vividness, to which language has no parallel. The Son of Man! no longer the meek, the lowly, the despised Nazarene; no longer the ready Saviour, the patient Advocate, the unwearied Intercessor—but glorious in his Majesty, as Judge and Lord of all! not, as once, the scorn

trasts with his own and his fellow-sufferer's just doom—"*We* indeed *justly!* but *this man* hath done nothing amiss!" Mark his testimony to the glories of the Son of *God!*—"*Lord!* remember me, when thou comest into thy *kingdom!*" But can we for a moment suppose, that all this enlarged knowledge of the Saviour, in his Divine and human nature—this ready avowal of a blessed faith in his pure and spotless humanity; this unhesitating reliance upon his divinity as Lord of a future kingdom of rest and joy—could spring up in a moment? In a moment too of bitterest shame to the suffering Saviour! who, as it *seemed*, was utterly destitute of power to save Himself? Over what kingdom could he suppose the suffering victim was about to reign?—It is clear to the eye, even of right reason, that during confinement in his prison-house, if not before, he had learned of Christ,—his nature and office, and life and conversation; was convinced that He was king of a spiritual and heavenly kingdom; had heard that "the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin" which is repented of: and having had belief to the salvation of his soul, closed his life of crime with penitence and confession; his sins and offences washed away, his pardon sealed, and his reconciliation effected. Alas! then, for those who plead the example of the penitent thief on the cross, as a palliation for their folly and sin, in putting off repentance till a death-bed! It is indeed to "boast of to-morrow;" in defiance alike of reason and of God. The pardon thus recorded has for its object, to check despair, *not* to encourage presumption.

of his enemies, thorns his crown, and a reed his sceptre; but, in his turn, scorning the vain and wretched pleadings of the impenitent despisers of the cross [1]—He shall array his "ten thousand times ten thousand," the host of heaven; that so arrayed, they may summon the worlds to judgment, and prepare them for the sentence He shall Himself pronounce. "Lo! all nations gathered before him!" What a moment of unutterable woe for the conscience-stricken wicked! to the righteous, what a moment for joy inconceivable! And under one or other of these feelings shall every individual hear the judgment, as it will be proclaimed by that voice which *all* must *then* obey—"Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire"—"Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world [2]." How merciful, thus so far to remove the veil of futurity, that the wicked, if they rush into misery, cannot plead defective knowledge, or a doubtful warning: the trumpet-call, which this Scripture sends forth, gives no uncertain sound for preparation [3]! Well, that the wicked take heed, and turn from their wickedness! Well, that the righteous servant "beareth all things, believeth all things, endureth all things," in this life present; cheered on his way by the prospect thus opened to him, of the life that is to come! Here, too, every man may judge himself; for the principle upon which this tremendous judgment will be conducted is clearly laid down. As our blessed Lord reminded the simple-hearted and unlearned of this world's wisdom, that "to the poor the Gospel is preached," even so to the lowest apprehension are the

[1] Prov. i. 26. "I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh." The whole passage, from verse 23, is well worthy of the deep and earnest attention of the scorners and the careless ones. See also Matt. vii. 22, 23.

[2] Matt. xxv. 34. It were well often to meditate upon the whole of the sublime scene, as depicted in this chapter from the 31st verse. See the Note in p. 222.

[3] 1 Cor. xiv. 8.

Divine judgments made intelligible. Where "glory to God, and good-will towards men" have marked human conduct, there the Judge will of grace give rich recompense of reward; and where neither the honour of God, nor the welfare of man for God's sake, have been heeded, *there* will the same just and gracious Being award dread punishment. Receive, then, with the solemn thoughts it demands, the Divine revelation of a future judgment, which the Almighty has thus vouchsafed by his blessed Son; keep in mind that you must *yourself* bear a part in it; and as a salutary awe fills your soul in the apprehension of it, heed the emphatic warning from heaven—"O Israel! *prepare* to meet thy God."

But with feelings of *awe* in contemplating this prospect, is mingled a bright *hope*, that mercy will temper judgment. You delight more and more to open the sacred pages of your Bible, where you find this futurity to be thus opened to you! How do you now bless God for your former sicknesses and trials, which first led you to his holy book, as the fountain of true knowledge, and the source of sure consolation! You find it to be, indeed, what its name imports—*the* Book of books[1]! What comforting passages now recur to your

[1] The truly great mind is ever the most humble before its God; and the highest intellect ever most ready to glorify the wisdom which is from above. I am irresistibly led to illustrate this observation by the affecting testimony borne to the inestimable value of the word of God, in one to whom I have before alluded in this work—one, whose intellect was of the highest order, and who so prized the Gospel of Christ, that judging it even from its beneficial effects upon society, in rectifying the errors of a fallen nature, he declared his willingness to "die a martyr for it," if so called upon. In his last illness, he expressed a wish that his attending friends should read to him. When asked, from what book? his reply was worthy of him—"Need you ask?—There is *but* ONE!"

It were difficult to imagine a more striking testimony both to the power of the word of God, in giving that peace, which the wisdom of the world *cannot* give; and to its inestimable value, as that "*one* pearl of great price; which, when a man had found, he went and sold all that he had, and bought it."—Lockhart's Life of Sir W. Scott, vol. vii.

memory!—Even *then* read and valued, they are *now* felt to be beyond price. There *He* speaks to us in life, who after death will be our Judge. Can any one marvel, that hope of mercy springs to the heart alive to a truth so encouraging? or that a soul which is about to endure his judgment, should wish to know Him, and search diligently the records which convey that knowledge[1], before the solemn meeting at the bar of account? Mark a prisoner, who, after brooding in his dungeon-cell over the sad hour which should call him to his trial, is brought at length for judgment. How earnestly his ear watches to catch the voice of his advocate! What a tumult of conflicting feelings agitate his heart, as he ponders what may haply be the plea, which wisdom or mercy may suggest to stay or mitigate his doom! Watch the anxious eye! At first it is lowered even to the very dust; a horrible dread and confusion overwhelms him; the apprehension of shame and punishment renders him hardly conscious where, or before whom he is; and as the books are opened, and his offence proclaimed, shame, even to agony, fills his heart. Oh, what would he not then give, that he had never sinned! At length the voice, for whose sound he had so painfully watched, is heard to plead for him; and the weight upon his heart is lightened. The plea is strong; its effect powerful; its success hopeful. He "lifts up the hands that hang down, and the feeble knees;" his eye is again raised; forgetful of all else, he now, in the intenseness of his feelings, and reckless of the gazing throng, watches every look, as well as every word, and when the plea is acknowledged to be good, springs to new life, and goes on his way rejoicing. So in the prospect of your final judgment—when, as you learn from the word of inspiration, that as surely as "the dead, small and great, shall stand before God," so surely

[1] Job xxii. 21. "Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto thee."

*then* shall "the books be opened [1]," and the record of unrepented sins stand in all their guilt—in the prospect of that judgment you feel, you own, you lament that you have sinned; and shame covereth your face. Then is it that you hear the Gospel-voice, reminding you of your plea—"Christ hath died; and become the propitiation for your sins."—You know that the plea is good. He who "was called in righteousness, to bring out the prisoners from the prison," now "saith to the prisoner, Go forth [2];" and that opener of the prison-house is Christ your Advocate. Well therefore may you place your whole trust and confidence in the merit of such an Advocate. Is He not Himself your pleader and your plea? You also go on your way rejoicing.

And what though the *future*—to which every hour is now hastening you on your way—be in *some* respects veiled? What though its exact state be so far shadowy and undefined, that "it doth not yet appear what we shall be?"—that uncertainty is rather as to the *extent*, than as to the nature of the change awaiting us, "when mortal shall put on immortality." We *know* certainly, for the Divine word hath assured us, that when the Lord "shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is [3]." Shall we complain that we know not, to its exact and full extent, what that likeness will be?—We *know* that it will be in righteousness and glory; and as the deductions of sound reason lead us to believe, that it will also be commensurate with our capacities, shall not the knowledge satisfy pardoned sinners like ourselves? To wish more knowledge on this point, were to expect that finite beings could comprehend infinity; to approach holy ground with unholy feet; to pry into the

[1] Mal. iii. 16. Rev. xx. 12. "A book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name." "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and *the books were opened.*"

[2] Is. xlii. 7; xlix. 9.

[3] 1 John iii. 2.

hidden things of God with unhallowed curiosity; and justly to share our Lord's rebuke to mere vain and unprofitable questioning, when He vouchsafed no other reply than a solemn admonition, rather to take heed to positive duty, than perplex the mind with such inquiries—"Strive to enter in at the strait gate [1]." Enough is revealed to warn us to avoid *here* what is sin, as we would *hereafter* avoid the woe which follows it; enough, to encourage us to follow after holiness now, if we would then see the Lord; teaching us clearly and emphatically, that he alone is truly wise who views the *future* world, as you *now* view it—the appointed state for final retribution; its fears therefore, and its hopes, paramount to all the present world can offer; since this world—its cares and its sorrows, its glory and its shame, its fears and its hopes—all shall pass away, and be as they had never been; but thou, an immortal spirit, reunited to thy body, must be made immortal—*thou* must exist for *ever*. Mortal *must* put on immortality [2].

[1] Luke xiii. 24. How wise and salutary the counsel which thus checks all vain curiosity! Suppose we knew *minutely* the state of departed souls, not only should we take no more heed, than now we do, to our eternal welfare; for as our Divine Teacher argues, if we believe not the testimony of the word of God, "neither should we believe, though one rose from the dead;" but the main point of individual interest would still press upon our attention—"What must I do to be saved?" Let us strive, then, *each* for *himself*, to enter in at the strait gate; and waste not inquiry on matters which are among the hidden things of God.

[2] No choice left! The wicked, doubtless, would fain sink into utter annihilation; but no such alternative will be permitted them. The living will be changed, and the dead will be raised, that they may pass to an everlasting existence. The thought might suffice to break even the heavy slumber of the sinner, and rouse him to the care of "the one thing needful." See 1 Cor. xv. 53.

## CHAPTER XLIII.

### LIFE'S LAST HOURS.

On the brink of this futurity you now stand! How earnestly do you strive to concentrate all your powers in prayer for *His* aid, to whom the *past*, the *present*, and the *future*, are alike known; who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; the Lord alike of death and of life! How anxiously do you seek to draw nigh unto Him now, before whom, as the Father of the spirits of all flesh, you will yourself, a freed spirit, so soon appear! You dread to meet Him *unprepared*. Rather, you desire to open to Him your whole heart, and no longer to palliate its unworthiness—an attempt vain as presumptuous; for a few hours will see you in the presence of the Searcher of all hearts. "I have sinned, but Christ hath died," is the one absorbing sentiment in your soul. No glorying in riches, or might, or wisdom! Are you rich? you candidly acknowledge, that riches profit not in the hour of death. Are you great? you as readily avow that earthly glory is but vanity, and that the grave will soon bring down your greatness:—you trust in it no more. Are you wise in the wisdom of the world? how scornfully do you cast from you all trust in that wisdom! "Talk not to me of aught but the wisdom which maketh wise unto salvation. To know Christ is the only wisdom *now!* To know Christ and Him crucified!—O merciful Judge, grant that He may be Christ crucified for *me!*" Your soul filled with feelings thus deep and holy, you long to give expression to them in prayer. Yet haply, the languor of sickness, and the agony of pain, check your utterance; and your flagging powers refuse their office. Still, be not dismayed; the Holy Spirit will breathe into your soul its gracious consolations, and will bring to your mind

the blessed promises, on which, during your sickness you rejoice to meditate. You will remember that if *you* "draw nigh to God, *he* will draw nigh unto you." Memory will recall the blessed assurance of your Redeemer, that "whosoever liveth and believeth, though he were dead, yet shall he live." You will trust in the Divine mercy, that with you, as with the Ethiopian convert, the *desire* shall be accepted, even though due power of uttering that desire be wanting, "If thou believest with *all thine heart*, thou shalt be saved." Neither can you forget that your heavenly Father waiteth not for the expression of devotion, to be reconciled! When the returning prodigal was as yet a *great way off*, long ere his voice could be heard, his Heavenly Father, "unto whom all hearts are opened," "saw him, and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck, and kissed him[1]." And can you doubt that He is less ready to receive *you* when *your* heart is filled with a devoted love and reverence towards Him; and when all *your* longing, also, is to pour forth the just confession—"Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee?" He Himself stays every fear—"This my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." So truly does the Church teach us, that "God is always more ready to hear, than we to pray[2]." May He grant you to receive this truth in all its power, and in all the fulness of its consolation!

You will find much aid and comfort in this your hour of trial, by applying to the appropriate service, appointed by the Church for the season of sickness and

[1] I know but few passages in Scripture more calculated than this to speak peace to the dying. When the *heart* is full of prayer, (so to speak,) though the tongue be powerless to give utterance to thought; to feel *then* that the heart-searching God knoweth our thoughts long before; and to believe what our blessed Saviour hath Himself taught us, that the thought, if right, is accepted—this conviction, and this faith, must give to the expiring Christian a peace which indeed "passeth all understanding."

[2] See the Collect for the Twelfth Sunday after Trinity.

approaching death—a service altogether instructive; equally awakening and consolatory; adapted most admirably both to fix the soul of the sufferer, where alone hope is to be found; and to aid in his high and holy office the servant of the Lord, who is called to minister. When that service is engaged in with a true spirit of devotion, how entirely is all self-righteousness put aside; all insincerity abashed; all vain terror overcome! The humble rejoice to find themselves encouraged; the faithful strengthened; the wavering brought back to the truth—whilst despondence is cheered, hope is duly regulated; nor was ever found, I should think, a heart so hard as to read or to hear it unmoved[1]. Throughout this service for the sick, from its opening to its close, there is a watchful care so to lead your thoughts to God, that neither consciousness of sin and infirmity sink you to despair, nor faith in the promises of redemption lead you to presumption. The truth, that God chastening you as a father, is by those very means at once proving his love and intending your welfare—appears, with a beautiful consistency, pervading every part. You pray that your conviction of this truth may be sanctified to you, leading you "to take in good part the chastisement of the Lord." As you approach nearer to judgment, it is possible that some fear yet remains, lest when there shall be arrayed against you sins, negligences, and ignorances, among them may be found not only those with which your own memory is burdened, but those also which *you* may have *forgotten;* yet which God forgets not, till washed out in the blood of the Lamb. You therefore implore your gracious Lord "to *remember not* your iniquities," but to "spare you whom he hath redeemed with his most precious blood." O the power of that plea! It can still those terrors which trouble even the contrite heart, when contemplating the perfection of Him, before whom the

[1] It is not my intention, in the present work, to enter into a general explanation of this service: yet I cannot forbear thus directing the sick to its ready aid.

freed spirit must appear. We ask, "How can such a Being forget?" True it is, that as *we* forget, He forgets *not*. Happily for us, *his* forgetfulness is but another term for his forgiveness; and his forgiveness, when vouchsafed, partakes of his perfections. It is complete. Our offences once forgiven by Him, are, as to their dreadful consequences, as though they had never been. So true is the Apostle's bold assertion, that "there is now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit"—a boldness well borne out by the solemn declaration of a reconciled God to his repentant people, that their "sins and their iniquities He will remember no more[1]." The stain of them is washed away by the atoning blood of the Lamb. "*His* blood cleanseth from *all* sin!" for He offered upon the cross "a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world[2]." Your faith firmly fixed upon this blessed truth, and seeing that thereby the perfection of Divine justice is satisfied —for "mercy and truth can now meet together[3]"—nature yields to grace: the fear which nature dictates is overcome by the hope to which grace leads you. How is there room for fear, when such a Being is at hand to save you—when your Redeemer is your God?

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## CHAPTER XLIV.

### THE TRIUMPH OF FAITH IN LIFE'S LAST HOURS.

THUS you "commune with your heart" in the awful stillness of life's closing scene; and, as each moment passeth away, your communing brings you nearer and

[1] Jer. xxxi. 34. Heb. viii. 12. Isa. xliii. 25.
[2] See the Communion Service. [3] Ps. lxxxv. 10.

nearer to that glorious Being, who, having conducted you at last beside the waters of comfort even in this wilderness of life, forsakes you not as you enter the gloomy vale to which it leads, even "the valley of the shadow of death." Dreading it as you did in prospect, you dread it not now! for *He* is with you, your Strength, your Guide, your Comforter: you "fear no evil: his rod and his staff comfort you[1]."

But perhaps, even when your repentance is sincere, your faith firm, and your hope bright with respect to the gracious acceptance of the soul by a merciful God, the heart still dwells with anxious care upon survivors —upon those from whom you are about to part, and whom you are leaving to the cares and troubles of a stormy world. You are a parent. Your eye rests upon the loved children weeping round you. They already begin to feel the desolateness which soon will overcloud them, when your affectionate voice shall no longer be heard to counsel them in their doubts, encourage them in their duties, cheer them in their sorrows, and direct them into the path of safety and of comfort. No word may pass; but you read their thoughts; and you, for whom they weep, are yourself the soother of their grief. Faith wins for herself a triumph here also. You fear not. You remind them of the gracious promises of an all-present and all-powerful God, that He will supply to them their every want; will be Himself in the place of the departed—a "Father of the fatherless, who defendeth the cause of the widows, even God in his holy habitation[2]." You remind them of his gracious goodness to you hitherto, through a long and varied life; you recount his many merciful providences towards you, and your numerous deliverances from impending danger or trouble; you gratefully acknowledge his long-suffering towards you, in giving you added years to prepare for eternity: you cannot doubt his goodness now! You now too

[1] Ps. xxiii. 4.

[2] Ps. lxviii. 5.

reap the reward of that Christian spirit which in life you delighted to exercise towards your fellow-creatures. You give assurance to those around you, for their guidance and instruction, that peace is in your heart; for you find there no revenge, no ill will, no painful recollection even of those evils which malice once worked against you; you have as fully forgiven all, as you hope for Christ's sake to be yourself forgiven [1]; —no burden of enmity presses upon your soul. Rejoicing to feel that "God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all," you see with a clearness, which no worldly cloud now dims, the justness of the Apostle's reasoning—"How shall God not with him also freely give us all things [2]?" Thus whilst you speak comfort to the mourning survivors, by showing that your faith is upon the Rock, and that your hope maketh not ashamed, you endeavour to point these truths for their practical instruction, that when *they* come to the same awful hour, they too "may find peace in the day of their visitation." You urge them to live above the world; no longer enchanted by its smiles; no longer terrified by its frowns; no longer conformed to its spirit, but "transformed by the renewing of their mind [3];" that so to them, as to you, a death-bed may be in peace. True! the pains and terrors of death, though sometimes they are mitigated, and the soul appears to pass away as in soft slumber, are yet often grievous to be borne; and the sorrowing hearts around you dread lest you suffer under them. Then it is that Faith enables you to nerve their courage by your own firm reliance on a "very present God [4]." As you approach nearer to the glorious Majesty of heaven, so entirely are you convinced of your own utter unworthiness in his sight, that you confess of these pains, even when they rack you with agony, that they are but the natural penalty of a sin-

[1] See page 147—on the Lord's Prayer.
[2] Rom. viii. 32.
[3] Rom. xii. 2.
[4] Ps. xlvi. 1.

ful and corrupt nature; too fully deserved by yourself, and too justly inflicted by a holy God [1]. You compare your sufferings with those of your blessed Redeemer—and the language of the penitent on the cross is the language of your heart—"*We* indeed *justly;* but this man hath done nothing amiss:" yet no sorrow was like unto his sorrow. Severe, too, and just as these pains may be, they will soon cease; and *then* you will be admitted to their Father and your Father, to their God and your God—happier even than their ardent love can wish you—no care, no sorrow, no pain. They weep; you weep not. You are yourself in proof that whatever be the nature of the trials to which we may be called, whether in life or in death, "as our days, so shall be our strength [2]." From the hour that sickness first crept upon you, to the present moment, when it is subduing your vital powers, and racking you with pain, you have had grace to be more and more submissive, more and more patient and resigned; your faith has been the more strengthened, your hope more brightened; and whilst your throbbing pulses tell how fast the tide of life is ebbing, you exhibit—*not* the stubborn pride of stoic apathy either to the pangs of death, which may soon come upon you, or to the grief of those who mourn you: *not* the daring of an assumed resolution—you exhibit the calm and steady fortitude which the Spirit of Christ alone can give; enabling you, in humble imitation of your agonized Redeemer, to cast your burden upon your God, and

[1] Death itself came by that judicial and righteous connexion which is between sin and dissolution: for how could a body defiled by sin be fit to accompany the soul to its destined immortality of bliss in heaven? Needs be, that it underwent such change as Almighty Wisdom appointed it to undergo by death, that it might afterwards be created anew, "like unto Christ's glorious body."

The body of Jesus Christ, though it was for a time forsaken of its spirit, knew *no corruption, because* it had known *no sin.*

[2] Deut. xxxiii. 25. See page 76.

submit the issue to Him. You are on your way to another and a better world;—deep and powerful indeed are the feelings which thus fill your soul; they are feelings which no wild fancy dictates; no vain imagination creates; they spring of "faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and the knowledge of him crucified." *He* is "thy plagues, O Death—and thy destruction, O Grave[1]!"—they are feelings which the agonies of dissolution cannot weaken; they are strong as the rock on which they rest; they sustain your faith, and elevate your hope, and prepare your soul for heaven!

At length, though consciousness fails not, you are powerless to give expression to it. The sight dims, the hearing fails, the tongue refuses its office—you are left in the solemn stillness of "the valley of the shadow of death." Your spirit hovering between the two worlds, prepares for its entrance upon that eternal state of which you have thought so much and so often, on the brink of which you now find yourself, and of which soon you will know all the wonders. With what awe do you walk in the seclusion, and gloom, and silence, of that dark and solitary region! True, for others the light of day may be shining in full splendour, but your eye is closed to its cheering ray; the voice of love and affection may speak sweet words of soothing to you; but, though never before was affection so deep, never before was love so strong, your ear catcheth no sound; your eye maketh no recognition. All those who would fain thus minister to you in life's last hour, you are about to leave for ever here. Yet you cannot sorrow for them. You have already, in faith, committed them to the care of One, whose care for their best interests is only equalled by his love and his power; and *they* are *infinite*[2]. Nei-

[1] Hos. xiii. 14.

[2] In the history of our blessed Lord's life, we find Him on various occasions directing us to follow his example. When, for instance, He would enforce the practice of humility in the exercise of good offices

ther can you sorrow for yourself. This loneliness, awful though it be, is but for a moment. You will

towards our fellow-creatures, He Himself washed his disciples' feet, and pointed to his own act, both as a type of his power and will to cleanse the soul, by washing it in the living waters, of which He is Himself the heavenly fountain ; and likewise as an illustration of that principle of humility which should ever guide, in their conduct towards each other, the disciples of a meek and lowly Master. But that history has recorded other passages in his short sojourn here below, which, though not directly pointed for our imitation, both challenge imitation as a duty, and permit it as a privilege. Thus, when He was about to yield up his life upon the cross, He bequeathed to his beloved friend, St. John, the care of his sorrowing mother, who was soon to be left unprotected—exposed alone to the hard trials of a cruel world. The whole scene, as depicted by the Evangelist, is of deep and affecting interest. We behold the mother, standing in loneliness of heart, and with an intenseness of feeling which mothers only can understand, viewing her wondrous Son in his agony, and watching his death in all the touching silence of utter hopelessness ; whilst the agonized Jesus turns upon her his last look of mingled pity and affection, with the simple and emphatic charge, severally to her and to his friend—" Behold thy son !—Behold thy mother !" True, the Saviour added no command that we should " go and do likewise :" yet the instruction is not less plain. See we not that He has for ever sanctified the tenderest feeling of which the human heart is capable —I had almost said its last weakness—in the thoughtful care for the temporal welfare of survivors. Can that cease to be a duty in us, which He practised ? Or can that care be in us unhallowed, for the exercise of which we can plead his own affecting example ? O how good, how gracious, how tenderly considerate for our weaknesses ! What a glorious proof that He was indeed Himself " touched with all the feeling of our infirmity except sin !" Behold Him offering up Himself on the cross, the world's great sacrifice ; bearing the weight of the sins of mankind ; in all the desolateness of desertion by his God, yet not holding his work finished, till He had provided for the welfare of his heart-broken mother ! He saw the " sword of misery pierce her heart," and He forgot his own woes in hers. As often then as we contemplate this scene, it is impossible not to feel the holiest gratitude at the assurance thus afforded to the Christian's mind, that even in the awful hour of dissolution, there may be mingled with care for our soul's welfare, care also for the welfare of those dear ones we are about to leave, and thus the parting of the living from the dead, sad and heart-racking as is the severing, finds some soothing even here.

The occasion thus referred to presents one of the clearest and most impressive explanations which the inquiring mind can wish, of those precepts of our blessed Lord, with respect to worldly carefulness, which are too often, if not wilfully misunderstood, erroneously applied. For instance, we hear his startling warnings—" take *no thought* for the morrow ; for the morrow shall take thought for the

change the sympathy of earthly friends for the love of your God, and the ministry of his angels, and the society of the blessed. God will not fail his word. He will be with you on your way. "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee[1]." Hath He said, and shall He not do it? Or can faith be so weak as not to trust Him in this the last great trial of the soul? He who hath sustained thee in the temptations of life—shall He not be thy rod and thy staff in the trials of death? Or, is his hand shortened, that He cannot save his Israel now?—Rather shall ample evidence of his presence be yours,

things of itself *." "If any man come to me, and *hate not* his father, and *mother*, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple †." Are we, therefore, to disregard the duties of the world, and outrage all the sweet charities of life? Look to the cross, and the Saviour there expiring! The same Being, who, when surrounded by those who made the world their idol, and heeded not the "one thing needful," warned with all the energy of a Divine love the souls of those careless ones, did, in his own death-hour, make wise and thoughtful provision for the morrow; and the same voice which declares the condition of our discipleship to be, that we hate those to whom nature herself hath bound us in bonds of affection, rallies its fainting powers in death, to enforce upon a sorrowing friend the care and guardianship of a surviving *mother*. With how marvellous—rather with how Divine,—a wisdom, anticipating every difficulty which our infirmities might present to a right understanding of his words, does the example of our Redeemer qualify and regulate his precepts! None but the proud of heart and of will need misunderstand his words. His precepts are strongly marked indeed; stamped with that decision which is characteristic of earnest affection and sure wisdom; but it is clear that they are directed against *excess*. Care for the body, so long as God pleases to prolong our existence in this lower state of being, is a duty; but if that care be taken in a presumptuous disregard of a superintending Providence; or, if it exceed —I should rather say—if it be not inferior to the care which we take for our soul's welfare, then are we careful overmuch: then are we taking "thought for the morrow," to the dishonour of our God, and the ruin of our souls. But a due and proper regard of our own well-being in life, and that of our survivors in death, is now for ever sanctified by the example of our Saviour Christ: only let us take good heed to be "likeminded" after his example ‡.

[1] Isa. xliii. 2.

* Matt. vi. 25. † Luke xiv. 26. ‡ Rom. xv. 5.

in a holy calm, which none but He can give; in a firm unshaken faith, which his Spirit alone can supply; and in a hope so holy and so bright, that as it emanates from heaven, so will it be an earnest of that heaven for you. Who knoweth but that when thy soul, thus plumed for flight, as a bird out of the snare of the fowler, free to expatiate on the expanse before it, spreads its wings for flight, angels may be at hand, ministering to thee as to the patient Lazarus, sustaining thee in thy flight, and bearing thee in safety and in peace to thy rest in heaven?

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## CHAPTER XLV.

### THE CHAMBER OF DEATH.

Of those who read these pages, some there may be, who, though each cherishes in his heart the fond desire that he may "die the death of the righteous," yet being strong, and healthful, and prosperous, are reluctant to think upon death—itself a withering blight to all man's hopes of ease and advancement in this world, and a barrier for ever to those fair scenes which prosperity may be opening to him. Much might be said for this reluctance, either if it were not appointed unto all men once to die, or if forgetfulness of that truth could confer any chartered privilege to keep death in check till man should proclaim himself ready for the meeting; or even if the contemplation of our end necessarily sunk the heart in sadness. But, as Death *must* be met, though the time of the meeting is shadowed in the awful gloom of uncertainty; as it oftentimes seizes the rich in their prosperity, cuts off youth in its bloom, and subdues manhood in its strength; whilst age, and poverty, and sickness, are spared still to linger out their existence of

weakness, misery, and pain; and as there can be no real enjoyment in this world, unless our peace be sealed for the next; wisdom tells us, that to *prepare* for Death—"man's last enemy[1]"—is by God's blessing the readiest way to gather courage for the meeting, and strength for the struggle. Hence to the strong and healthful, as to the sick and dying, speaks the voice which came down from heaven—"Watch!" But since it is difficult, in the hurry and bustle of life, to be free for such thoughts as befit our watchfulness, it were not less wise than profitable to begin the duty in the sad stillness of the chamber of death.

Come, then, let us enter that still and solemn chamber; contemplate the stern conquest which, for a season, death hath there achieved; and in the salutary pause so given to earthly views, bear our thoughts to that future world, which the dead have entered, and towards which we are ourselves hastening. The scene, how strange—how awful! There lieth one, in whom lately moved the springs of life in full activity, giving animation to every the minutest portion of the frame. Now all is motionless. The shadow of death hath passed over those features, of late instinct with every varied expression which might indicate intelligence; and marble itself is not more rigid than those once plastic lineaments. The eye is closed, yet the dark brow evidences that no easy struggle was that which the mortal frame endured, ere it gave up the dread contest with this champion of the grave. It were not possible to contemplate such a scene unmoved. With a silent, but impressive eloquence, not only does it warn the sinner, startle the careless, and rouse the lukewarm, but it encourages the righteous, and admonishes all.

What change is here wrought? Was the dead exalted in station, and commanding in wealth? Was he one whom during life the world saw high in honour

[1] 1 Cor. xv. 26.

and in fame; the admiration of the wise, and the envy of all? Where now the dazzling splendour of his course? All is faded in the gloom of death. Nothing profits now but the use he may have made of worldly advantages, to promote the glory of God and the welfare of mankind. If his wisdom and his might, his riches and his influence, rich gifts from heaven [1], were applied to uphold true religion and virtue; if all things were done, "not as unto men, but as unto God;" if an uniform sense of responsibility to a heavenly tribunal was the paramount feeling of his heart—determining his motives, and regulating his counsels, and directing his actions; if, amid the allurements of this world, his affections were set on another; if, happily an instrument of good to his fellow-creatures, he yet referred the power and the glory to God; if, living unto the Lord, he also died in the Lord—*then* "his works do follow him [2];" and he will be recompensed, not indeed of merit, but of grace, through the satisfaction made by our Redeemer, Christ; and his course, like the ship's bright track on the dark waters, will still serve to guide into the same blessed path others who are "passing the waves of this troublesome world," and, like him, steering for the haven of their rest. To the righteous, then, his example speaks encouragement. Are you haply of those servants who delight to do their Master's will? Are you of exalted station, ample wealth, and far-spread influence; yet self-denying towards your God [3], benevolent towards your fellow-creatures, and of a humble heart? Though favoured of this present world, is your mind set on that future world awaiting you? Do you strive so to use your earthly blessings, that they may turn to heavenly blessings? so to use each passing hour, that your last hour may be peace? To you the example of the righteous dead is a continual encouragement, "not to be weary in well-doing," but to remember

[1] 1 Chron. xxix. 12. [2] Rev. xiv. 13. [3] Matt. xvi. 24.

that "you shall reap, if you faint not." Nay, they well remind you, that there *is* a spirit of ambition, which even in this world is an object worthy the aim of the noblest minds—the ambition of living to the honour of our God, the benefit of our fellow-creatures, and the good of our immortal souls. Death destroys not that ambition—it but suspends its agency. *That* spirit will resume its power over us in higher worlds, where the glory of the Lord will be our aim, and to serve and to please Him be our ambition for ever. To those, however, who, in a spirit of pride and vain-glory, live the slaves of wealth, or of worldly ambition, making self their idol, and holding this world to be their resting-place, what an instructive lesson is here presented! The world has no monitor like the grave. The dead thence speak the language of no earthly wisdom. They not only tell that "all is vanity," they are themselves in proof that the voice is truth. They warn the ambitious, that if the wealth, the station, the power, the influence, at which they aim, be at last made their own, all will soon fade, even as his over whose lifeless form they now stand: soon they will have left their riches for others; and as they brought nothing into this world, neither may they carry any thing out. Reader! wisely examine well your own heart. Has worldly ambition ever agitated you? has it ever wrapt you in dreamy visions of greatness and applause, of riches and of power? Have you, when under this delusion, been tempted to forego your rectitude, in the pursuit of that to which the spirit of ambition points? Behold and see that even the highest earthly honours must end in dust: all is indeed vanity. Even as you view your fellow-creature now, cold and powerless in the awful repose of death, others will one day behold you. Neither can your pomp follow you; and however in life you may have been exalted far above others in wealth, fame, or station, you must with them return unto the dust whence you were taken. Meditate upon this scene

with the solemn feelings which it demands. It may well calm all the agitating hopes and fears of those whose aim reaches no higher than this present world of vanity and woe.

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## CHAPTER XLVI.

### CONSCIENCE AROUSED.

THUS far the death-scene is encouraging and instructive. There are those to whom it is more. There are those whose consciences, long dormant, it at length awakens, and to whom it renews the memory of events long forgotten, but now remembered—remembered with horror ill concealed, and remorse unavailing. These are they, who in life first envied their neighbour, then hated, and at length persecuted him. "Where *now* is the fury of the oppressors?" By a just retribution it is now in their own hearts: thither the arrow, aimed too well at another, has at last returned. Victims of self-reproach, they now in their agony envy the dead, not as of late, his wisdom, power, riches, or other worldly advantages—they envy him the calm and peaceful silence of the grave. If you injure your neighbour whilst he lives, no sooner do compunctious visitations begin to torment your conscience, and better thoughts are yielded to, than you may seek him, and recompense him, and be reconciled to him[1]. Have you slandered his fair fame? By a frank avowal of your sin, and a candid expression of sorrow for it, you may, in some degree, so heal the wound you have made, that the past will be forgiven, and you will "gain a brother." If you have aimed at his peace of mind, by the shafts of wit and ridicule—nay, if you have, in the coward spirit of

[1] Matt. v. 24.

wickedness, covertly endeavoured to undermine his comfort by *secret* attacks, in which you professed no participation, though you rejoiced in the pain you caused; if you have mocked and scoffed the virtues which you would not imitate; if, because you felt his very excellence to be a tacit reproach upon your own worldliness, you therefore hated whom thus you envied—still, so long as life is spared, it is not impossible but that you may relent, and offend no more; and that he who was so long an object of your injustice and wrong, may, with that truly noble spirit which is ever attendant upon the virtuous, be as placable as you are relenting. But when he, whom you have thus injured in thought, and word, and deed, lies dead before you—*he*, free for ever from your cruelty; *you*, left with the burden upon your soul of injuries freshly remembered, but beyond recall or recompense—calumny, hatred, scorn; offences indeed against your neighbour, but to be answered for before your God—can imagination picture to itself a state of mind on this side the grave more utterly wretched? Death has rolled back the tide of human passions, and the heart, like a forsaken shore, lies exposed to itself, with all its long-concealed realities; laid bare in all the unsightly variety of a selfish pride, a deluding envy, and a harsh uncharitableness, which the towering wave once covered. Then it is, that the soul, conscience-stricken at the recollection of sins long forgotten, receives with amazement and dread the solemn truth, that "for all these things, God will call us to judgment [1]." So appalling is the feeling which

[1] It is a wise as well as a Christian habit, to encourage ourselves to think kindly towards those among whom we live, lest in death we lament opportunities of kindness for ever lost, and regret occasions of harshness then past recall. It may indeed sometimes happen that in pursuing a course so opposed to our natural feelings, we are called to exercise no small share of self-denial and self-control. But how far better to bear the weight of self-denial, and to submit to the curb of self-control in life, than risk the misery of remorse in death! David's example is in clear and in beautiful illustration of this reasoning, which

thus arises from the consciousness of having injured another, when we view the dead, unoffending now, though long injured—*all opportunity of repairing the injury for ever cut off*—that part of the misery of those dread offenders against the majesty of the Most High, who once cried "Crucify him, crucify him!" and of those who in succeeding ages, by their desperate and presumptuous sins, *have* crucified Him, and *do* crucify Him afresh—part of the misery, under which they severally shall suffer at the last great day, will be the *view* of Him whom they persecuted—"they shall *look on him* whom they pierced"—*that* sight aggravating even the gnawing of "the worm that never dieth," and the torment of "the fire which never can be quenched."

It is when under solemn feelings like these—feelings quickened and cleared to the truth by the scene which calls them forth—that we are fully aware of our real position, as responsible to our Maker for a kindly or a cruel bearing towards our fellow-creatures. Blessed, if the subdued heart even then bends itself to the tardy confession—"I have sinned. God be merciful to me a sinner! I know and feel my sin. I

he felt in all its force, and acted upon with a decision and perseverance well worthy our imitation: "My soul hath long dwelt among them that are enemies unto peace." But what course did he adopt? Mark his resolve: "*I labour for peace* *." This is a course not less wise than holy. It is in evidence of that true wisdom which prefers duty to inclination, and the future to the present. Nor let any delude themselves by supposing that injuries of harshness, which they may have forgotten now, they will always forget. Even in our daily experience, circumstances for long years totally forgotten, are, by the occurrence of some or other event associated with them, brought to light with all their vividness of joy or sorrow, regret or happiness. Who then shall say, how much of the past now forgotten, may at the close of life rush again to memory, compressed into a moment—that moment, the moment which precedes our entrance upon eternity? Thou little dreamest now, perhaps, what hidden cells of memory may then be opened.—*Watch now!*

* Ps. cxx. 5.

feel that if to love the Lord our God be the first commandment, the second, though demanding only that we love our neighbours as ourselves, is *like unto it*: like unto it, in the authority upon which it rests; like unto it, in the responsibility which it involves; for not only is it written in heaven, that duty to my neighbour, neglected or fulfilled, will form part of my future judgment[1], but my conscience tells me, that were it *not* so, Divine justice would be outraged, and wrong would ultimately triumph. For these things therefore, God *will* bring men into judgment! Happy they who take warning in time, and do, from their very heart, love their neighbour as themselves!"

It is the more important to heed these truths, because very little experience of the world and its doings is required to convince us that the greater part of human misery is the fruit of human passion. True, the Almighty Disposer of all events regulates and directs, for man's *final* good, circumstances in this life which appear to him the most trivial; even as in the formation and preservation of the meanest insect we trace the same Omnipotence which made and governs the universe. From Himself, too, He sends troubles upon the sons of men, and in so doing permits the wicked often to be the instruments of his will. Indeed, trouble must ever attach to mortal man. It is our inheritance on earth, as surely as freedom from it is our promised inheritance in heaven[2]. Thus not only when the Lord, chastening whom He loveth, sendeth sickness, sorrow, death, do we know that He so chasteneth us, even as a father the children whom he loveth, regulating the measure of our troubles according to his mercy as well as according to his will; the object both of his mercy and his will being our salvation, and the hand which wounds being the hand

[1] Matt. xxii. 30.

[2] Rev. xxi. 4. "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

which heals; but even when the fraud and malice of *men* weave for us pains and sorrows of a different stamp, we know that they, also, are permitted of our Heavenly Father for our final good. This view of human suffering it is which more than reconciles the sufferer, though it does not relieve of their responsibility those who cruelly inflict it. Of the thousand ills, indeed, which rack our hearts, how large a proportion of them are the infliction of man. Man, himself born to trouble, becomes the bitter foe of his fellow-creatures. Social life too often testifies to this truth. To men collectively, the bountiful providence of God supplies from age to age, food, shelter, clothing; surrounds them with relatives, and friends, and all the endearing charities of life; gives them his holy word by which they may have companionship even with Himself, and by his sure guidance pass through this world in safety and peace. By the Saviour who is revealed in that word, He stilleth the agitating fears of conscience under a sense of sin, whilst by the Holy Spirit there promised, He assures them a never-failing Comforter. Further, He not only in his word promises a glorious immortality of rest, and peace, and joy, but did raise up from the dead his crucified Son Jesus Christ, that *He* might be the *first-fruits* from the dead; an earnest of the resurrection of his followers; fulfilling, by the exercise of his power, the promise which his mercy had vouchsafed, that man should rise again from the grave, and know sin and death no more. But this hopeful state of comfort—how is it disturbed by man himself! How often, in social life, where neither poverty, nor sickness, nor any special sorrow, as sent from heaven, is present to disturb, human passion brings misery! Envy, hatred, and ill-will soon overcloud a prospect which God's bounty leaves so fair[1].

[1] That this is really the case where religious principles are not active in counteracting the natural evils of the heart, must be evident

Is it not wise, then, to guard ourselves, by every motive which reason and religion may supply, against unchristian conduct towards our neighbour in life, lest in his death we be left to the dreadful misery of knowing, that recompense *then*, we can offer *none?* Passion once abated, pity will supplant envy; compassion, hatred; remorse, revenge; and the dead will triumph over the living. Thus, even in this lower world, the indulgence of evil passions towards our fellow-creatures finds at last just retribution; and the exercise of kind and benevolent affections, sure recompense—memory goading the wicked with recollections of past injuries which no sorrow can now repair, and soothing the good with the remembrance of past kindnesses which no time can wear away. The nobler motive, however, for curbing the evil, and stimulating the good dispositions of our hearts between man and man, yet remains; and is to be found in the solemn truth, that not only will the evil inflicted upon another in life

to every reflecting mind. Upon the traveller's heart how often does the truth strike with full force! He journeys cheerily perhaps; for all around him is blithe and joyous; and he himself moves in the full flush of health, and with the elastic step of unwearied strength. His spirits are radiant as the glowing landscape before him. When he contemplates the wide-spread fields, green with verdure, or white for the harvest, his soul expands with ardent gratitude to his Creator; and he confesses that God is indeed a gracious God, preserving all things as He created them, for the service of man—willing man's happiness. Every thing around him breathes delight: the very birds of the air, the cattle in the fields, the insect tribes on wing, fluttering away their sunny hour, and teaching us how short our own life may be—all appear to rejoice in their very existence, and in their own notes of praise offer a hymn of thanksgiving to their glorious Creator. Thus as he journeys, and surveys the scene which his progress opens, fancy pictures to him, that in some quiet valley, as it lies before him, with its lowly dwellings, sheltered and secure, peace and quiet have surely fixed their habitations; and as far as a merciful Providence is concerned, his fancy may be realized. But it were a mockery of experience, not to fear, that even there, amid that outward calm, too often the agitating passions of a fallen nature disturb that quiet, and rob the scene of its repose. Where those passions are resisted indeed peace abides; but where they are permitted to exercise their sway, they bring on earth strife for peace, enmity for good-will.

bring fearful misery in death to him who hath inflicted it, but that the evil we *do*, or *say*, or MEDITATE, against a fellow-creature, must be accounted for, not to him alone, but to Almighty God, who will judge both the oppressed and the oppressor; and who hath declared in terms, plain as they are awful, that as He will judge the despiser of his word, and the contemner of his laws, so He will judge the oppressor of his creatures.

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## CHAPTER XLVII.

### SURVIVORS.

THE dead hath passed to his rest. The spirit hath returned to the God who gave it, and the bodily frame, ever liable to ills and infirmities, and lately racked perhaps by pain and agony, now lies free from even the fear of ill. Its mortal trials all are past; nor pain nor sorrow reach it more: the form so "fearfully and wonderfully made"—in death as in life, surpassing wonder—will soon be but as the dust from whence it sprung. Yet, with what reverent care do survivors tend the lifeless clay, gaze upon the well-loved features with a strange, lingering look—hopeless, yet not despairing—as if the voice would again address them, the eyes again open and beam upon them, and the brow, now shaded with the awful frown of death, again be radiant with smiles to cheer them as before! Still the garb of the grave, and the narrow dwelling for the dead are duly prepared; and in the preparation Christian hands perform the office with a tender and scrupulous care, which *seems* scarcely requisite for a perishing frame, so soon to tenant the grave, and be no more seen. It is, however, a *holy* care, sanctioned and sanctified by our blessed Lord Himself. He "being dead, yet speaketh." He deigned to permit,

after death, those affecting ministrations towards Himself by which tenderness delights to relieve its woes, and give proof of its love, when mourning the departed [1]. Affection clings closer and closer still to the object of its care. Nor is this only a tribute which affection pays to memory: it is an evidence which faith bears to truth. It evidences a firm trust in the Divine promise, that the body, though sin has rendered it liable to that corruption into which it must soon be turned, will one day be raised a glorious immortal body—will know death no more, because it will know sin no more, but be like unto Christ's glorious body. Therefore is it worthy our reverential regard, even in death; and Faith thus justifies the pious care with which Feeling decks man's ruins for the grave.

These careful attentions have, to a certain extent, their beneficial influence, and relieve in some degree the heavy hours of sadness which intervene between death and the grave. Misery finds some alleviation in thus hovering round the dead, performing its kind offices, and thinking its kind thoughts, and still pausing, ere the last look be taken. At the grave, too, the solemn Service for the Burial of the Dead itself pours a healing balm into the wounds, then afresh opened; sustains the fainting spirit by the heavenly tone of its exhortations, prayers, and thanksgivings; and, for a season, throws the brightness of hope over the dark hour of bereavement and despair [2].

The mourners return to their home. There the loved one greeteth them not. The honoured parent —the beloved child—the faithful friend—the brother —the sister! Where the voice which was wont to

[1] Mark xv. 36; xvi. 1; also Luke xxii. 55, 56, and John xix. 39, 40. In Mark xiv. 8, this subject is treated by our blessed Lord Himself in a very affecting manner. The reader would do well to refer to the chapter.

[2] I apprehend that no mourner could ever hear the solemn Service for the Dead, provided by our Liturgy, without acknowledging its excellence, and feeling its power.

cheer them? the eye which spoke its welcome, and the smile its joy? Does no bright gleam break forth from out this gloom? no comfort relieve this utter desolateness? What voice is that which whispers to the heart—"Come to *me*, and be at rest? Come, ye weary and heavy-laden, and *I* will refresh you?" Lo! it is a voice from heaven! and does not your full heart respond, in the memorable language of your agonized Saviour, "Then am I *not* alone, because the Father is with me?"—He, to "whom all things in heaven and earth, and under the earth, do bow and obey"—He, who though He dwelleth in heaven, where no man can approach unto, yet beholdeth all the inhabitants of earth—He, who in the person of his Son, Jesus Christ, our incarnate God, did promise that He would be all in all to his faithful people, under whatever trials He might place them, and to whatever worldly deprivations He might see fit to subject them —*He*, in the fulness of his power, and love, and mercy, invites you to Himself, and promises, that with *Him* you shall find rest. *He* will be with you in your loneliness—"a *very* present help in this your needful time of *trouble*."

With what earnest desire do you hasten in prayer to the more immediate presence of that gracious Being! You never felt in full force, till *now*, the value of his promise, that even when "he vexeth you with all his storms," He will be "as a hiding-place from that wind, and a covert from that tempest[1]." With what hurried step do you retire to your chamber, there flee to Him, and there hide thee under the shadow of his wing, till the tempest calm! You commune with Him: you pour out your heart before Him: the world shut out, He alone is witness to your woe. Him, though invisible, you know to be present in his power, which is almighty; in his mercy, which is unbounded: in his love, which is infinite. And his pre-

[1] Isa. xxxii. 2.

sence is life. Remembering the blessed command—"Call upon me in the time of trouble"—you, in this your time of trouble, do call upon Him; you make your prayer unto the God of your life; you "cast all your burden upon him;" and He fulfils his promise—He "sustaineth you," He "delivereth you[1]." You "pray in secret;" "he rewardeth openly." O the blessed power of prayer! Prayer hath gained grace, and grace hath dispelled the darkness which had well-nigh confounded you. A light hath sprung up in that darkness, clearing your understanding to know your God, rectifying your view of his dealings with the children of men, and chasing far away the dark gatherings of despair. Tears indeed find their way—but tears are not forbidden to the mourner. Nay, they are for ever sanctified—"Jesus wept," when he whom He loved died. Not to mourn a blessing reft from us, would well-nigh argue insensibility to blessings given. Tears, too, by a merciful dispensation of the Maker of our frame, are at once the effect of sorrow, and to a degree its alleviation: they are like the rain, which falling from some heavy cloud as it threatens storm, both draws off the tempest, and by its welcome stream renews to the fainting earth its freshness and its powers.

Your mind thus roused by grace in answer to prayer, you dare to look again upon the sorrow from which, in your near communion with God, you had, in some sort, withdrawn yourself. You again feel all its weight, but you feel added strength to bear it. The dark cloud still hangs over you in all its gloom and sadness; but a light gleams from that cloud, which removes its terror, and disarms its power. Your God hath set his bow there—the token of his heavenly presence; the pledge of his love; the assurance of your safety and your peace. Yes! Faith reveals to you the *hand of God* in this your dark sorrow. You

[1] Ps. l. 15.

collect again your scattered powers of thought; you direct them to a juster view of human sorrow; and in a strength beyond your own, you return to the world, a wearied perhaps, but a patient pilgrim, onward on your way to heaven.

You remind yourself that all events, though brought about by man's agency and other secondary causes, are permitted by that omnipotent and omniscient Jehovah, to whom "all things in heaven, and earth, and under the earth, do bow and obey[1];" you believe that without Him "not a sparrow falleth to the ground;" and that by Him "the very hairs of your head are all numbered." This your cause of mourning, then, is known to Him—nay, it is as He willeth. You struggle with your feelings, and you listen to your reason, and you summon faith to your aid, and you judge yourself; God and your own soul the only witnesses to your self-striving. "What!—is this event according to the will of God, and shall I murmur? Shall I not submit? Shall I not be reconciled? Have I day by day, through life, prayed to Him—'*Thy will be done?*' and now that it *is* done, shall I complain? Or shall I blindly forget, that as often as this prayer is offered, I have offered it, not with reference to his power, as if *that* were aided by our prayers in accomplishing his will, but in reference to ourselves, that grace might be so fully imparted to us, that *we*, even as angels, should ever delight and always acquiesce in the accomplishment of his will, whatever that will may be? It is *now* his will to afflict me. Oh! may I be enabled still to say from my very heart—'Thy will be done!'—'O Lord! I

[1] See the Service for the Visitation of the Sick, and the commendatory prayer by which the minister is directed to strengthen the faith of the weak, and animate the hope of the lowly. How wisely does the Church, on that occasion, lead us to this view of an all-present and all-controlling God,—"The Almighty Lord, who is a most strong tower to all them that put their trust in him, *to whom all things in heaven and earth, and under the earth, do bow and obey,* be now and evermore thy defence!"

believe; help thou mine unbelief.' I do believe that Thou art equally good, and wise, and gracious! but I implore Thee 'help thou mine unbelief.' Alas! the infirmity of my nature, how does it bear me to earth, when thy will is so done, that I am called to mourn! O that I had the patriarch's firmness, and could resolve with him—'though God slay me, yet will I trust in him!' My tongue does indeed confess, that 'it is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good;' and my present resolve is to be submissive to this dispensation, and patient under my affliction; yet my rebellious and wayward heart!—O Father, let thy Spirit of holiness and strength keep me firm to my purpose, and true to my obedience."

Thus recognizing by faith the hand of a heavenly Father in the event which you mourn, you become submissive under his dispensation. Bowing yourself with all reverence before Him as the Supreme Disposer of events [1]; neither looking to the world for consolation, nor trusting to your unassisted powers for strength, but to his promised Spirit for both, you repose under a constant sense of his gracious presence. Nature, it is true, may ofttimes struggle against faith, and tempt you to repine at your sad bereavement. You pray. Grace is the answer to your prayer. The Spirit of God is with you, opening your understanding to "understand the wondrous things" of his providence, as well as "of his law [2];" bringing to your remembrance all things which may temper your sorrow and assuage your grief; and summoning every consideration which reason and religion present to the mind of man, to make obedience to the will of God easy to you. Hence you will pause to consider, that death is a penalty which must at some time be paid by mortal man; and therefore, to be paid without a murmur, when He, to whom it is due, demands payment. God hath claimed his own. Nay—death

[1] See page 12. [2] Ps. cxix. 18.

is not only a penalty which *must* be paid, it is a penalty, payment of which none of the sons of men, were the decision left to their free choice, would forego. Where is he who would willingly live for ever in this his present state of trial and infirmity? Who would willingly retrace the toilsome path of a long and anxious course; be again young; again begin the voyage of life; meet again its storms and tempests past? And as for the spirits of the blessed, with whom your hope is that those whom you mourn are now mingled, in all the glorious liberty of spirits freed from this encumbering mortal coil,—could aught which this world might offer them, even of health unbroken, and peace undisturbed, prevail upon them again to visit earth? Would Abraham leave his seat in Paradise, even though he might return to more than his own far-spread possessions, and his high and honourable state on earth? Would Lazarus leave his rest in Abraham's bosom, to revisit a world where oppression and wrong made him their sport, and pride spurned him as the victim of misery[1]; even though want were to be exchanged for abundance, trouble for rest, pain for ease, and the outcast be held in honour? Would there be found *one* among the "spirits of the just made perfect," ready to revisit this strange world of change? Would he whom you mourn, and who is now, as we humbly trust, of that happy number—would he, think you, be again a sharer of our toilsome pilgrimage; a struggler with us, amid the difficulties of a sinful, weary world, like this? Sure it is, that the departed righteous would never again accept the boon of this life. They are happier even than your affection can imagine them; infinitely more happy than your care could make them. As they *cannot* return to you, so *neither would* they, if power were given them—but "*you will go to them*[2]."

[1] Luke xvi. 20.

[2] 2 Sam. xii. 23.

## CHAPTER XLVIII.

### RECOLLECTION OF MERCIES.

In seeking consolation, however, far be the thought that you should forget the dead! Indeed, to bid the mourner forget, were to argue alike insensibility to others' woes, and ignorance of the very constitution of our nature: vain, too, as to bid the tide stay its flow, or the winds their course. Christian sympathy rather weeps with them that weep, and bids the mourner *remember*—though wisdom directs memory to recall *mercy* as well as judgment. Withdrawing your mind then for a season, not only from the loss felt by survivors, but even from the final gain of the dead, meditate with grateful recollection on the Divine love, which, throughout the late dispensation, tempered judgment with mercy, and so wonderfully ordered the several circumstances attending it, that your meditations have already led you to recognize in their ordering the hand of a gracious and a present God.

None wonder that you mourn in your affliction. You mourn a father. Sad and heavy is your loss. The wise guide and counsellor; the tender and able protector; the watchful guardian is removed. What a blank life now appears! Yet consider a moment. What was his closing scene? Remember *that!* Your heart, in those hours, used to whisper to you—that such a close of life as *his* were surely a foretaste of heaven. The holy calm, the perfect resignation, the peace of God there evidenced, gave to the scene a serenity, which you can never recall without gratitude. With what humility would he point to himself in proof of the power of Christian faith! "See," he would say, "See the effect of grace on my heart, in bearing all my pains of body: all my anxieties of mind for you whom

I am about to leave; all my natural apprehensions of launching upon the great ocean of eternity! See how it enables me, not only to bear my trial with fortitude, but to meet it triumphantly." With what collectedness did he both warn and encourage you to begin betimes that discipline of the soul, which faith requires, and which he had long practised to his joy! With what earnestness did he bid you seek diligently in prayer the Spirit of grace to aid you in that work! How boldly did he testify to the power of the Spirit! Under that holy influence his own heart, which, once wilful and turbulent, was wont to chafe at whatever obstacles crossed his path in life, had long since grown calm; the cares which once perplexed and agitated him, had long been laid aside; and he "came to his grave in full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in its season [1]."

You cannot forget the clear views of the past and the future, with which he was thus blest at the close of life, or the words of wisdom with which, in the intervals of pain and anguish, he declared them. When striving to fix upon your heart, and the hearts of those who surrounded him, the assured truth, that religion has "the promise" as well "of the life that now is" as of "that which is to come [2]," he appealed to his own experience; addressing you almost in the patriarch's language—"I have been young, and now am aged, and dying: yet must I bear my testimony to the encouraging truth, that never saw I the righteous forsaken. Oh! follow after righteousness. Nothing else will give you comfort when you come to lie here. Nay, *that* is profitable, even if you can feel no higher motive to actuate you than a wish to be happy as to this world [3]:

[1] Job v. 26. [2] 1 Tim. iv. 8.

[3] A writer not less eminent for his piety and wisdom, than for his practical application of them, has testified to this truth in a passage so full of force, that I cannot forbear adding it*:—"The secret direc-

* The writer was Sir Matthew Hale, Chief Justice of England in the year 1671. He died in the year 1676, at the age of 76.

how profitable it is, when your aim is everlasting happiness, they best can tell, who have passed from righteousness to glory. With respect to myself, I am going the way of all the earth! but as I look back upon the path I have trodden in this wilderness of life, I can see clearly that Divine mercy has throughout accompanied me. It has often indeed happened that I have had hard struggles with myself, and have needed all my faith to sustain a drooping courage upon the approach of unlooked-for ill, or support a wearied patience

tion of Almighty God is principally seen in matters relating to the good of the soul; yet it may also be found in the concerns of this life, which a good man, that fears God and begs his direction, shall very often, if not at all times, find. I can call my own experience to testify, that even in the external actions of my whole life, I was never disappointed of the best guidance and direction, when I have in humility and sincerity implored the secret direction and guidance of Divine wisdom." This testimony, in itself valuable, becomes inestimable when we look to the character of the witness. He was not only a Christian of exemplary piety. That were enough; and, as far as he himself was individually concerned, all in all. But in reference to his influence upon society at large, he was far more; and his example is proportionably of wider influence. He was a man of extensive erudition, vast acquirement, sagacious discernment, sound discretion, and noble judgment. Of character unimpeached, even in times of unparalleled difficulty, he pursued with inflexible integrity the path of virtue and of honour. "Through good report and evil report," he kept on his way unmoved by either from his appointed course; and leaving his envious maligners to the bitterness of their own hearts, he committed his way unto the Lord, and calmly "waited God's leisure," "to make his righteousness clear." He was what every truly great man is found to be, humble before God, in proportion to the greatness of the blessings vouchsafed to him, and kindly disposed towards his fellow-creatures in proportion as he was exalted above them. He never forgot the unanswerable question—"What hast thou that thou hast not received?" Nor was he ever unmindful, that for the use of every talent committed to his charge, whether learning, wealth, or station, or the influence arising from either, he would be finally responsible to God. From one so learned in true philosophy, of legal powers so acute, and so zealous for truth, as a faithful follower of a meek and lowly Jesus—the testimony thus given upon his own experience, may well confirm our faith, and enliven our hope in that Gospel which professes with no vain pretensions, to have "the promise of the life that now is," as well as "of that which is to come;" pretensions which to his joy, he found justified in his own case, through a long and arduous life.

under the continuance of it; but now that my mind is cleared from the film which worldly fears and worldly hopes once interposed, I see plainly that every trial has been necessary for me. Perhaps some loss of industrious gain occurred. I was mortified; and my very soul was vexed within me. I am now aware that such a check to my worldly spirit was needed; for success began to cause, almost insensibly, a love of the world and its wealth and advantages, which, if unchecked, had made me no longer a servant of God, but a slave to Mammon. Disappointment was mercy; for it disciplined my soul to seek heavenly treasure. Another time sickness brought down my strength in my journey. I chafed under the mortifying weakness in which I lay; I could not reconcile myself to the alternate pain and languor of a sick and wakeful couch. But now, indeed long since, I have been convinced, that the word of the Lord is true—He 'chasteneth whom he loveth.' He knew that I was naturally inclined to glory in my strength and health. The language of my heart, known to Him, was that of folly—'Tush, I shall never be cast down; he hath made my hill so strong:' and I began to live as though sickness and death were never to be mine. Was it not then mercy which awakened such a sleeper, raised him from the death of sin, and gave him the light of life?—So also, when I had set my heart on this or that object, and disappointment crossed my path, no sooner had I submitted myself, and committed my way unto the Lord, than I found reasons to bless God for it; the very disappointment ended in my advantage. Events proved either that the gain in prospect would have deceived me, or that it was denied, only that some greater good might happen to me. Indeed, so sure am I that every trial I have had was necessary to discipline my soul for the service of God in heaven, that I bless Him specially for my tribulations—nay, I now 'glory' in them; knowing, as I do, that 'tribulation

worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed[1].'"

Thus, though at intervals, as strength ebbed and flowed, the venerable parent whom you mourn strove to lay open his own experience of the past, to guide and sustain you—himself he further sustained by declaring his view of the future. "Behold me," said he, "between the two worlds for which man is formed. From the one I have escaped: to the other I am hastening; and even now discern its shore. True, I must die! How often have my thoughts dwelt upon that solemn truth! How often has the awful question passed my mind—What is this death? What is that change, which will free my soul from its earthly house—this mortal body; and set it free in its own spirituality? I am now about to learn the answer to these questions. My whole frame is evidently giving way: the tabernacle of this body is loosening at every cord, and will soon be unable to hold its habitant—the soul. Dying to this world I must live to another. Do you wonder then why terror does not subdue me? Why an awful apprehension of that hitherto unseen land of spirits does not confound my reason, and terrify my hope!—What if I know that I must die! 'I know that my Redeemer liveth!'—I know that He liveth for *me*—that He will be with me according to his promise, even when I am passing the waters of death. When my soul shall leave this body of infirmity, and be free to range in its proper element—a spiritual world—this Redeemer will guide, and sustain, and comfort me. If I faint in the day of mine adversity, my strength is indeed small[2]—I have no dread—no fear. Faith conquers."

Exhausted with his earnestness, here he paused, and it almost appeared as if the silver cord were loosed, not again to hold him in life. At length, however, he raised himself, evidently rallying all his dying powers for one last effort, by which he might let his "light

[1] Rom. v. 3—5. [2] Prov. xxiv. 10.

shine before men," and so give added force to his testimony for the "truth as it is in Jesus." His expressions were peculiar—"I am going!—raise me higher—higher yet!—heaven is before me!—Yet—another word;" . . . . For some time no word was spoken. The pause had less of earth in it than heaven. But at length life's ebbing tide again flowed: and again the dying voice told the travail of his soul. "Now I see before me 'the valley of the shadow of death.' Its shades will soon gather round me—I shall soon walk in that gloomy vale. But no darkness will, even there, cloud my soul. No!—no darkness there! for I trust in the name of the Lord, and stay myself upon my God. The Lord will be my light!—*That* He hath promised [1]."

Another pause! . . . At length, in a tone which struck on the hearts of all around, he suddenly exclaimed—"That pang!—Oh! *that* was death! Often, in moments of serious thought; often have I then wondered in myself what were death's last struggle! I have felt it now! Yet mourn not! Not even now do I feel terror, or fear, or doubt. The promise which for long years has been in my heart, with a hopeful prayer that at my death-hour it might be accomplished, is in me now fulfilled—God's grace be praised! He, a present God—my Creator, my Redeemer, my Sanctifier, 'He is thy plagues, O Death,—He is thy destruction, O Grave.' Is He not? Look at me! You see the death agony indeed to mark my brow! You hear the natural moaning of exhausted nature, in a body worn with age, infirmities, and pain, and in the act of dissolution; but could you see my *heart—there* you would find victory over the past; and for the future, peace and rest in the bosom of my God.—Lord Jesus! receive my spirit!—Lord Jesus! come quickly—Blessed, blessed Saviour—O take me to thyself!"

You can never forget the look which followed this

[1] Isa. lx. 19, 20; l. 10.

outpouring of the dying soul! His countenance radiant with joy and triumph! The stillness of death on earth, a fit emblem of his rest in heaven!

Say, mourner, wouldst thou call him back again?

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## CHAPTER XLIX.

### THE BLESSED FRUITS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

It is well, then, to *remember:* taking heed, however, not only to remember the dead in their cold graves, silent and cheerless, dust and ashes—but to remember them before death, in their hour of struggle indeed and agony, yet their hour of triumph and of glory. Is there no consolation in *this* retrospect? O cherish fondly in thy heart the memory of that hour in which they triumphed! Fired by their courage, and sustained by their fortitude, fear not thyself to meet the terrors of death—fear not to endure the pains of it. *They* found that "as their days were, so was their strength [1]." Thou also wilt find strength proportioned to thy need, when thy day shall come, if only thou followest the same holy course, and seekest the same holy aid.

There may, however, be mourners, who in looking back upon the death-scene, find no such consolatory retrospect. *They* perhaps have witnessed death, when he came shrouding every faculty in darkness, and overpowering every sense in a deep oblivion of the past, and an unconsciousness of the present. Theirs is the language of despondency. "Had we seen life's sun go down in the brightness of hope, our sorrow then would have been comparatively light and brief. We should have felt it to have been for the most part a selfish sorrow, which reason and religion had united

[1] Refer to page 76, and the note there inserted upon this subject.

to relieve; and our minds would gradually have been disciplined to bear resignedly what, in truth, was a sorrow to survivors only; whereas, disease having rendered every faculty powerless, death seized him whom we mourn, when his senses were confounded and subdued, and the breathing alone testified that he had not already passed to the world of spirits. His departure hence was without one word spoken, one look turned upon us, one sign given! Memory therefore brings not its consolation to *us*."—It is on occasions like this, that the value of habitual piety is felt in full force, with respect both to the dead and to survivors—then it is, that even in this world, the righteous have a foretaste of their reward, both in their own blest though unexpressed hopes, and in the comfort which they impart even reflectively to the loved ones they leave behind. What then, though infirmity so beset the close of existence, that no *outward expression* of faith and hope be given? still if there has been an uniformity of Christian conduct in life and health, who shall doubt but that even in the hour of sickness unto death—when the soul found no responsive power in a sinking body to give expression to its feelings—it yet did feel and enjoy the presence of its God? For myself, I cannot for a moment doubt but that even *then*, though a final barrier intervened between the dying and *survivors*, the soul communed with its *God* in a high and holy converse, to which, when hampered by its earthly ties, it was all a stranger; that it then learned of the land on which it was about to enter, and prepared itself for that rest, which there awaited the people of God. I the rather urge these considerations, because there are few occasions, where the sorrow of mourners has a stronger claim upon our sympathy, than when aggravated by fears and doubts like these. It must always be borne in mind, that when they, who watch the death-bed, view their dying friend as under the dark influence of apparent unconsciousness, they must not suppose it a necessary consequence that the

sufferer is unconscious, because powerless to express consciousness. There may be power to apprehend whatever tends to soothe pain, to allay fear, to strengthen faith, and animate hope, though no power to give token of recognition—no power to speak the thanks of gratified affection, or even to look acknowledgment of care so soothing. Prayer, therefore, and holy converse, with words of affection, and encouragement, and counsel, may well occupy those moments of awe. To the living, such services assuredly speak comfort: we may hope that they speak encouragement also: and who shall say, that even the dying may not thereby find fears removed, and faith sustained, and hope brightened? Let me open to you such a scene.—

For long and weary hours the sufferer lay, apparently unconscious of all which passed around him. The voice of sympathy poured its soothing tones unheeded: nor movement, nor word, nor look, indicated aught of sensibility to things of this lower world. The hour was indeed dark; and for a season no cheering ray burst forth to mitigate its gloom. At length the voice of a far distant friend, summoned to the sad scene, appeared to awaken the dormant powers, and rouse them into action. "Sure, I know that voice"—"Sure I do know *that* voice," repeated the lips of him, whom for many, many hours, weeping friends had lamented, as being lost to sense, ere lost to life. His words were brief yet forcible, distinct and clear; and thus his converse ran.—"I am happy, very happy. No pain. I have never lost my consciousness: only for a long while, no voice, no power. I have been praying. God is with me. Too weak to make prayers: but I remembered my beautiful Church prayers, and the Litany—and I bless God that I loved them early—when a child I knew them and loved them, and I do not forget them now. God is with me: and Jesus Christ is my hope. God's Spirit comforts me, and tells me that He accepts my repentance through my blessed Saviour; He pardons me: He will

receive my soul. This comforts me.—O yes! great comfort. No pain at all. Bless God! no pain—only no strength. I could not move, nor open my eyes, or speak. Thank God! I can now speak—I cannot see you. Soon I must go quite away—glad you are come—glad when I heard your voice." . . . The silence of the chamber of death thus broken, you may well imagine how welcome were those sounds; welcome as the last unlooked-for sunbeam, bursting from the evening cloud which long had darkened it. At his request we kneeled down; that with one accord, one heart, and one mind, we might again join in serving that gracious Being on earth, whom the dying trusted so soon to serve for ever in heaven. You may well understand, for your own heart must fully sympathize with the worshippers, the fervent gratitude, and unfeigned reverence, with which prayer and praise were offered to the God of all mercy! How heartfelt the thanksgiving for this proof of his great mercy and loving-kindness! Then, indeed, the Gospel triumphed. Lo! the chamber of death, turned into a temple of praise; the house of mourning, better than the house of joy; and when the loved one passed to his rest, we wept indeed—for ourselves. Who could weep for him[1]?

[1] It is thought right to state, that this scene is faithfully delineated, as the author himself witnessed it. Word for word the dying record is given. Some years have since passed; but the mingled feelings which it called forth; the transitions by which it was marked, from blank hopelessness to the clear and bright reality of heavenly consolations; its triumph over every infirmity which death could accumulate upon the sufferer—the change it effected in the grief of surrounding relatives and friends—the firm tone which it gave to faith in the grace of God here, in his promise of glory hereafter—the brightness it gave to hope—the resignation it cherished—the holy calm which it infused—all were so indelibly impressed upon his mind and heart, that so long as memory holds her seat, the impression can never weaken; and he has recorded it—faithfully, but he trusts not too familiarly—in the humble hope that the fact may, in various points of view, afford both instruction and comfort; pointing out, on the one hand, the blessedness of habitual piety; and on the other hand, testifying in a most marked and striking manner, to the inestimable value of our Liturgy

Can such a scene be contemplated without benefit? Instruction and comfort alike flow from it. With what irresistible force does it urge upon us all an habitual holy life; at peace with God and man! With what authority does it insist upon an uniform watchfulness in spiritual and heavenly things, that the solemn call to death and judgment never find us unprepared! A long life had this dying Christian passed; many a sharp trial had tested his faith, and tempted his hope; but prayer had been his panoply. So armed, as in life he held his stedfastness, so in death he wavered not. How beautiful to see even *then*, trust in God's goodness, faith in his mercy, reliance on the Saviour, and confiding joy in the Spirit —graces of a Christian life, untouched even by death! Fiercely as the king of terrors assailed him, the God he sought was at hand to give him courage. What, though his foe drove him to a dark and dismal loneliness, on the confines of either world—the light of this world and its sweet charities shut out, and the next world still veiled,—he was not alone. His heavenly Father was with him, "*because* he trusted in him [1]." He never cast away his confidence; *therefore* he was enabled to travel on in imparted strength. The prophet's language best tells the working of this piety. "Who is among you that feareth the Lord; that obeyeth the voice of his servant; that walketh *in darkness and hath no light?* let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." To him the world gave no light, all there was one dark gloom. But his faith never weakened, and his hope never dimmed, and he walked in the light of the Lord.

Whoso would thus die in the Lord, let him *live to the Lord.*

—a ready guide to devotion, not only in health and in the assembled congregation, but in sickness, in sorrow, in solitude; even in the awful loneliness of death.

[1] Isa. xxvi. 3. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: *because* he *trusteth* in thee."

If instructive, the scene is consolatory also. We learn, that if to ourselves or others, Death as he strikes his blow, should in like manner press heavily on our sense of outward things, and render us incapable of giving expression to our wants or wishes, of acknowledging the kind offices of attending relatives and friends, and of speaking our testimony to the power of faith, and the consolations of hope; yet where Christian faith has striven in life, we must not doubt but that it will conquer in death. The loved one who lies breathing, indeed, but apparently unconscious of all around him, has still the presence of his God to sustain and soothe him. With that Being he holds converse; to the care of that Being he commends himself. And who shall doubt but that a present God will walk with him even through the solitude of that dark valley over which Death has cast his awful shadow; will bear him safely through its dangers; fearlessly through its terrors; successfully to the end? In the chamber of death, then, whilst the soul yet tenants its mortal dwelling, you are not discouraged, even under circumstances like these, from offering up the sacrifice of prayer. Prayer *must* comfort survivors; it *may* comfort the dying; and though the dark cloud of unconsciousness be impervious to us, there may be light beyond it, of which we see not the brightness; and the sun, which to our sight sets in gloom and terror, may be calmly taking its course to open upon another world in renovated strength, and entering upon a glory which no cloud again shall darken.

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## CHAPTER L.

### FAITH TRIUMPHS.

It can hardly fail, I trust, but that these reflections afford consolation to the Christian mourner. When

he looks to the past, and pictures to himself the dead as those, in whose heart the light of hope, fed by a heavenly flame, burned with clear and steady light, amid even the dark and gathering clouds of death; when he remembers that having wisely "taken oil in their vessels, with their lamps," though they might sometimes "slumber and sleep," under the wearying weight of human infirmities, yet were they ever ready to trim their lamps and renew their light at what moment their Lord should summon them [1]—the retrospect is so full of peace and hope, that, no longer dwelling on the loss he has sustained in this world, his heart is raised in ardent aspirations after the sure mercies promised in the next.

But other mourners there are, to whom the same reflections bring no consolation. Who shall not pity *them? They*, perhaps, may be called to bewail some

[1] Matt. xxv. 1—3. "Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom." The whole of the parable is replete with rich and varied instruction. It especially teaches us that a profession of godliness profiteth nothing, without the substance of it. Both are necessary to our salvation. As without the lamp, oil would be supplied to little purpose, so without oil the lamp would be useless. In like manner the form of godliness, to benefit the soul, must be accompanied by the power of it*. Religious profession is the lamp, by bearing which we confess ourselves the servants of the Lord; piety is the oil to feed the lamp, that it may shine and give light, at whatever hour the Lord shall summon us to meet Him. We learn further, that those who profess the name of Christ, are not justified in their neglect of such duties as their state of life requires of them, under pretence of devotion. From the *acts* of devotion, we are occasionally free; from a *spirit* of devotion *never* free. The lamp is not always to be burning; but the oil is always to be ready. Even the wise virgins were permitted to "slumber and sleep," so long as they were ready when their Lord came. So David consoles himself for his imperfect services, by remembering that where the heart is right, God mercifully allows occasional cessation from the outward services of devotion, according to his own gracious word—"I will not reprove thee, because of thy sacrifices, or for thy burnt-offerings; because they were *not alway* before me†."

* 2 Tim. iii. 5. † Ps. l. 8.

wicked one, who has been removed, sinful and impenitent, as far as human knowledge can discern in a case so awful—who not only in death gave no token of a Christian hope, but in life gave no evidence of a Christian faith. Such mourners heed not the voice of sympathy. Theirs is the affecting remonstrance—'How bid ye *us* be comforted! Around *us* there is only one dark gloom!'—If the reader of these pages thus sorroweth, let him not sink under this sad misery. There *are* sources of consolation even for him. Let him set his affections on things *above;* let him have in all his thoughts, the God who dwelleth there; let him search the word of truth, which that God did send from above; let him commune with himself on the high and holy things there revealed. Reason and revelation will then unite to sustain his drooping heart, and cheer his fainting spirit; and though the trial to which he is called as a mourner be in all its weight and bitterness—a cross heavy and painful; a cup, full to overflowing, and bitter to the very dregs—yet shall he gain strength to bear the one, and comfort to sweeten the other. Let him look stedfastly to the *eternal* world, whither we are all hastening; and consider well, what view he will *then* take of this severe trial of his faith[1]; so may he find rest to his soul: for, severe as the trial is, he will then understand, that it is appointed, as all trials, of every kind, however varying in degree and character, are appointed, to *prove* man's confidence in God; even as

[1] It is a thoroughly wise habit of mind in all cases, especially in any doubtful or difficult course of action, whether in adversity or prosperity, to *pause* ere we determine upon it; and ask ourselves—'How shall I estimate this apparent loss or gain, this pain or pleasure in a *future* world?' Wisdom would often avail herself of that pause to influence our minds, and regulate our course aright—to dissuade us from pursuing some worldly advantage which might compromise our duty; to urge a patient bearing under some trial of our faith which tempts to murmuring: and win us over to some virtuous self-denial, some holy resolve, which we had well-nigh cast from us. When tempted by pleasure to forget God, or by sorrow to distrust Him, it is a thought, salutary as comforting, that "*the end is not yet.*"

gold is tried seven times in the fire[1]. With respect to himself, therefore, the fact, with all its pain and grief, is to be considered as part of the weight of the cross which it may please the Father to lay upon him; and with respect to the dead, happily it is not for man to determine the future state of his fellow-creatures, or to pronounce what may be their acquittal or condemnation before their Almighty Judge. Our blessed Lord has left us the clearest and most unerring counsel to guide us in all such difficulties. Whatever happens to ourselves or others, not only are we directed to leave the final disposing thereof to the will and mercy of the Supreme[2]; but we are forbidden to judge another, or to decide upon another's final acceptance or rejection before God[3]. Each individual, even the best and the holiest among the sons of men, has enough, and more than enough, of himself to do to prepare his own soul for heaven. How forcibly does our Divine Teacher thus instruct us, in his memorable

[1] Does the refiner purify the silver stream seven times in the fire * ? The Lord proveth his faithful servants, and trieth them like as silver is tried; so as by fire †. And who shall wonder? "He is," indeed, "like a refiner's fire ‡."

[2] It must never be forgotten, that since time is as nothing in the sight of God—a thousand years as one day, and one day as a thousand years—survivors can never know, either what contrition may have taken place in the soul of the dying, even in that awful hour when, though consciousness may remain, all power of giving expression to its feeling shall have passed away; or what reconciliation may have been effected, if, even then, the soul turn with all its remaining powers to its Saviour and its God. For any individual indeed to trust in this thought, as a ground for delaying repentance, would argue folly even to madness in a mortal man, whose tenure of life is so precarious, that any moment may summon him to that judgment, which will pass him to everlasting misery, if he die with his sins unrepented of and unforgiven—to eternal joy, if he die a pardoned sinner, reconciled and accepted. Yet the truth must not be concealed; tending, as it does on the one hand to check the presumption and harsh judgment of self-righteousness; and on the other, to soothe the sacred sorrows of affection.—See page 118, N.

[3] See page 253.

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* Ps. xii. 6. † Ibid. lxvi. 10. ‡ Mal. iii. 2.

reply to those, who with natural curiosity on the awful subject of a future judgment, inquired as to the number of the redeemed—whether the more would be saved or lost—"Lord, are there *few* that be *saved?*" His reply, brief, and emphatic as brief—conveys counsel, at once wise, and safe, and comforting: "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." Do we not all feel that the counsel is mercifully adapted to our infirmities? Does not each man find toil and labour sufficient for the soul, in working out his own salvation, and keeping that strait and narrow path of holiness, which leadeth unto life eternal, without entangling himself in such inquiries as called forth our Lord's rebuke—*vain* inquiries, when time of *trial* is *past?* Our own individual course is an *onward* course. In the fight of faith, if our fellow-soldiers contend manfully, we are encouraged; we follow in their path; we contend the more earnestly: and even when they have passed to their reward, the memory of their example animates us[1]. But, if they fall back, desert their standard, and perish in their faithlessness—we grieve indeed, and are sore vexed: *our own* course, however, is still the same—*onward.* We are not to pause and suspend our exertions, that we may inquire with forbidden curiosity into the consequences to themselves individually of their dereliction of duty. What may be the eternal state of the individual is by the Divine counsels concealed from us; and remains among the hidden things of God[2]. With respect,

[1] Luke xix. 12—27. "He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come." We find in the conclusion of this parable, that of the faithful servants, one was set over *ten* cities, another over *five:* both rewarded, though apparently in unequal measure. But it appears, that as both parties had acted well according to their ability, so each was rewarded according to his capacity of receiving and appreciating reward.

[2] There is yet a stern instruction in these fears. That they are felt by us for others, is as a heavenly monitor; warning, that unless

therefore, to others already passed into the spiritual world, their probation is ended: and "God will give to every man, according as his work hath been." If your mind lingers still upon this death-scene, which memory presents to you in its dark hopelessness; if, as you are about to resume the active duties of life, these agitating fears disturb you, you must resolutely keep your affections on things above; you must have your conversation in heaven; you must, "in heart and mind, ascend whither our blessed Saviour Jesus Christ is gone before[1]." To this end, study "the *whole* counsel of God;" contemplate Him, as revealed in the Gospel of his Son; meditate upon his wondrous nature as there

we also repent, they will be felt by others for ourselves. Can there be a stranger contradiction in human character than is evidenced in the fact, that those who for the everlasting welfare of relatives, friends, and neighbours, manifest the most sincere and anxious care, should so often appear totally regardless of their own hope of heaven, as if either a wish on their part would secure it to them, or others could be as indifferent to their welfare as they themselves are? Too many there are, who, whilst in tender love they shrink in horror at the thought, that parent or child, relative or friend, or fellow-creature, should fall short, either of that righteousness in life which leadeth to peace, or that holiness in death which breatheth hope—are as reckless for themselves, as if for them the pains of hell had no terrors, and the glories of heaven no joy. Wise, indeed, it is, never to cease this anxious care for others' welfare. Well does such care become them! But let them at the same time take good heed *themselves* to avoid those sinful courses, the evil consequences of which they profess so much to dread in the case of *others*. A bad example far more than countervails the best counsel. Does the parent dread in his children the fearful consequences of sabbath-breaking, idleness, evil-speaking, or other species of irreligion! Let him, for *himself*, keep the Sabbath holy; let him be himself active in "every good word and work;" let him for himself "do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with his God." So shall his example be honoured, his counsel be heeded, and his warning voice not uttered in vain—for his "children shall rise up and call him blessed." Is it possible for any man to be so blind and insensible, either as not to see that if Divine vengeance will punish unrepented sins in the case of others, it will not spare the same sins in himself; or as his heart rejoices in a good and virtuous child, not so to lead his own short life of trial here, in all godliness and honesty, that he may be cheered by the hope of sharing with his child hereafter a life of rest and joy for ever!

[1] See the Collect for Ascension Day.

declared to us, and the wondrous change promised to ourselves in the world beyond the grave; that by so "acquainting thyself with God"—meditating upon what HE *is*, and what *we shall be*[1]—you may learn to calm, if not remove, these fears, and in patience possessing your soul, find peace and joy in believing. What then are the attributes, and what is the nature of that God, whose presence will be your heaven; whose glories, the subject of your everlasting praises: and his perfections, your wonder and joy through the endless ages of eternity?—His *holiness* is so complete, that though such was his love to man, that He gave his Son to die for him, He cannot love what continues evil: and in a future state of being, as He cannot love the wicked, so they must be driven from his presence—cast out for ever. In like manner his *happiness* is perfect. That can never be clouded, though impenitent worlds were to pass to their punishment. Now it is revealed to us, that when Christ shall appear, the righteous, being admitted to their blessed inheritance in the kingdom prepared for them "will see God face to face, and be made *like unto Him*" —like unto Him in holiness and happiness: a similitude perfect in kind, though imperfect in degree. See we not then, that immortal spirits also, themselves for ever holy and for ever happy, will be unable either to

[1] St. John, indeed (1 John iii. 2), when he directs his beloved to look forward to their blessed change after death, after glorying that "now are we the sons of God," immediately adds, "and it doth *not* yet *appear* what we *shall be*." But this expression denotes only that with our present limited faculties, we are incapable of comprehending the *extent* of that change—the *fulness* of that heavenly inheritance, which is consequent upon our adopted sonship. And though so vastly beyond our present conceptions will be the glories of an hereafter, that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him*;" there is no uncertain knowledge as to the promised inheritance itself. The uncertainty is one as to *degree*, not as to enjoyment.

* Isa. liv. 4. 1 Cor. ii. 9.

love any thing which is not holy, or to know diminution of happiness, even from witnessing the sufferings of others, whoever those sufferers may be? We can draw no other conclusion. The love of God will be all in all—a feeling so absorbing, that what *He* loves, that alone shall the blessed love. All the kindly feelings which here had their exercise in mingled love to God and his creatures, will then be centred in Him; and the sweet charities of life, *here* resting indiscriminately upon those whom various earthly bonds unite in common affection, will *hereafter* not only be enlarged beyond our capacities now to comprehend, but will be spiritualized also: and so expanded and purified, will form an harmonious bond of love between "the spirits of the just made perfect;" "a great multitude, which no man can number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues:" all having one great object—to celebrate the love and the praises of their God. Nor will it then be possible for the happiness of the faithful to know diminution or change, even should any be absent from the company of immortal spirits in heaven, who were of their fellowship or kindred here on earth. The happiness of each shall be, according to their capacities, *perfect;* neither shall they again know doubt, or care, or sorrow. "*Every* tear being then wiped from every eye," "there the wicked cease from troubling;" there even those sorrows which fill the souls of the righteous, when they witness, in life or in death, the evil course of wicked men, and see them dishonouring God, causing wretchedness to their fellow-creatures, and bringing ruin upon their own souls—even *those* troubles caused by the wicked there cease. The spirits of the just cannot love aught which God loveth not; and their happiness, being complete, as it needed not the participation of others to perfect it, so the exclusion of others diminishes it not: else had Abraham bewailed, and Lazarus found no rest, when the wretched Dives was in torments, from which he implored relief, but implored in vain.

Dives indeed thought, and thought with horror, upon the wretched course of life which his surviving brethren were pursuing in the world he himself had left; but those agonized feelings were *part* of his *punishment*. Between him and the blessed "there was a great gulf fixed"—an impassable barrier—even the perfect love of God; a barrier which, whilst it excluded sympathy with the condemned, excluded as a necessary consequence, any feeling which might diminish that fulness of joy, which the love and presence of their Heavenly Father extend to the righteous. So impossible will it be for the pure and holy spirits of the blessed to love that which God loveth not, or to know diminution of happiness, when once admitted into the mansions of the blessed.

When meditating upon this high and awful subject, God forbid that we should presumptuously pry into the hidden things of the Almighty! The "ground whereon we stand" is indeed "holy ground," and well does it become us to "put off our shoes from off our feet"—to remove all mere earthly views of a matter so spiritual; yet it is wisdom, it is duty, thankfully to receive, as added motives to a holy life, whatever intimations our Divine Teacher may have been pleased to give of our eternal state; and, as far as He has revealed the future by the light of his word, humbly to contemplate it for our instruction and comfort. Not to see that on the point in question He has mercifully vouchsafed sufficient knowledge to check the fear we have been considering, and set us free from those perplexing thoughts which otherwise might have destroyed our peace in life, and darkened our hope in death—were to close our eyes against blessing. Thanks to this "marvellous great light," our view is sufficiently clear for safe guidance: and in proportion as faith operates upon the mind and heart, its power will remove every doubt, calm every apprehension, and enable us to repose our whole trust and confidence on *Him*, "in whose presence there is *fulness* of joy;" and

who, to those who are admitted into his presence, will communicate that joy in all its fulness; every accepted soul there rejoices, for ever, undisturbed in serenity of bliss. I trust, therefore, that if in some darker moments of sorrow, the mourner's grief ever be rendered more poignant by fear as to the state, after death, of those who have lived unchristian lives, the considerations here brought forward may serve to calm his spirit; reminding him that even this sad trial—this weighty cross—is not to be borne for ever. Pass a few years of this transitory life, and the burden will be removed, to be borne again no more. Thus let him raise his soul high above this troublesome world, and "fix it where true joys are to be found"—joys, which not even those agitating fears can reach: even the joys of heaven, which neither memory of the past or anticipations of the future shall diminish or change.

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## CHAPTER LI.

### THE MOURNING MOTHER COMFORTED.

THAT the *aged* should sicken and die, although it grieves us to witness their suffering in sickness, and their removal by death, is yet an event which a calm consideration of the general ordering of God's providence does much to relieve and reconcile. We see all things come to an end. It must be so: for the shadow of death which entered into the world with sin, passed over all created things, animate and inanimate[1]; though THE SUPREME controlleth for man's benefit, even the consequences of man's sin, by making death, which man himself brought in by sin, the

[1] "Cursed is the *ground*, for *thy* sake."

door to that immortality, for which he was originally created. The death of the aged, therefore, is but according to the Divine wisdom, which ruleth over all. As the sun knoweth his going down, so man now has no sooner passed his meridian of life, than he descends naturally to his setting, and passeth away, far hence, to rise in a new world with renovated strength and glory. We find, therefore, that when Christian faith and Christian hope sustain them, those who, far advanced in years, have long suffered under the infirmities of body and anxieties of mind incident to mortality, are themselves more than reconciled to the change awaiting them in death; and though many a day of pain is soothed, many a night of waking cheered, by reflecting, that in suffering patiently the various trials of sickness—and so evidencing the power of the Divine word, with the efficacy of Divine grace - their lives are not passed otherwise than to the glory of their God; yet, wearied with long toil, they generally look with resignation and even joy to the hour, which shall end their pilgrimage, and bear them to their promised home in heaven. Reason and religion thus unite in affording consolation to the mourning survivors. Every hour we live, every step we take, every word we speak, every thought we breathe, as they bring us nearer to the grave, bear us nearer and nearer to our final meeting with those loved ones gone before us. Thus it is, that gradually the pain of the past is lost in joyous anticipation of the future [1].

[1] If this consideration bring comfort to us, when we carry our thoughts to those, whom in death as in life we honoured; whilst our hearts, softened by sorrow, fill with love both to God and man; so it may serve as a salutary check to those who, from any offence taken, any clashing or mutual interests, any feeling of wounded pride or broken regard, are about to act towards a neighbour or fellow-creature in an uncharitable or unkind spirit. "Every step you take"—so conscience whispers them—"brings you nearer to the grave; and after that comes the judgment. If you yield to this temptation of injuring your neighbour, in thought, word, or deed, how will you meet him *then?* Are you of a revengeful or malicious spirit? Do you delight

But thou, weeping mother! thou refusest to be comforted! What are thoughts like these to thee? *Thou* mournest the *inverted* order of human events. Thou mournest a daughter. Thine is the impassioned lamentation of a heart, which consolation vainly tries to soothe.—"Oh! that I had died for thee, my child! Must then the young be taken and the aged left? Is failing strength like mine to be spared, with its tottering step and wearied spirits; and art thou in thy youth and beauty to be taken; thy spirits all joyous, thy step firm and active? Speak to me, my child, yet once again! Once more look upon me, my loved and beautiful! Cheer my aching heart, as thou wert wont. Smile once again on thy mother—heart-broken!" . . . . Who shall wonder that nature thus bewails; though not even your voice shall wake the dead. The warm cheerful current of life is suspended; and the form is fixed, as the frozen waters—cold and motionless. Yet view it again. Is it indeed your

to give pain, where you have taken offence; to stir strife where you may have been disappointed; yourself to rise in fame upon the ruins of another's good name?—Remember, you are nearing your grave!—the grave which buries every error—covers every defect—extinguishes every resentment."

Sure it is, that the proud and revengeful shall *one day* lament, with a compunction which wiser thoughts had spared them, that they should ever have warred with dust and ashes, to which their enemy and they must alike come. From the grave should spring only the flowers of sweetness, fond regrets, and tender recollections!

Indeed, the consideration is every way important. It serves to check evil by reminding us that every step we take in a sinful course, must bring us nearer to the borders of that grave, which will pass us to our strict and solemn account for eternity: and in that prospect he is a bold man, who "refraineth" not "his foot from evil."—It tends also to reconcile every trial, by the near prospect of its close; for who would be impatient of a sorrow which soon will end, when his patient continuance in well-doing, for the brief space of a short and uncertain life, gives hope of glory, and honour, and immortality? What strength does that thought supply in the path of holiness?

Whoso thus watches his steps is wise; and "whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered*."

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* Prov. xxviii. 26.

daughter? True, not long since she tenanted that form; but she has left it now. She herself is in another and a better world. You humbly hope that she is in paradise, with the spirits of the just made perfect; where the departed saints of every age are in bliss, awaiting the last trumpet-call, to resume their once mortal bodies, and find them immortal—glorious, like unto Christ's glorious body, and fit dwellings for their immortal spirits. *This* body, then, over which you hang in agony, is not the daughter who was your delight and joy. It is but the tabernacle she once inhabited. The casket is left, but the treasure is gone—recalled by *Him*, even the Lord of life and death, who having entrusted you with it for a season, at length wills to reclaim his own: ready for that day, "when he shall make up his jewels[1]." Though during her short passage through this life, she was as good as your anxious heart could wish her, she is now in scenes far more congenial with her pious soul, than those which she has left. Her gentle spirit is at rest with God. Whilst you are contending in the busy turmoil of this lower world, remember!—*she* has no care, for her dwelling is where all is peace; *she* has no fear, for she rests where all is safety; *she* has no doubts, for she reposes where all is certainty of bliss for ever. Your heaviest cares thus lose half their weight. Your own troubles—how easily are they borne, when you reflect that she shares not their burden! She is far—far above them. You need not weep for her, as if she were any longer an object of your compassion. When of late we saw her labouring to sustain what weakened powers of life remained; striving against pain; her breath failing, and her trembling frame agitated by the awful strife of death—then indeed who could behold, and not weep tears of anguish? You wept—we all wept—she alone wept

[1] Mal. iii. 17. "And they"—the righteous—"shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels."

not. Nor were our tears *then* shed in vain for her. 'Tis true, she bade us check them: but as they flowed in heartfelt sympathy, she welcomed, and was grateful for them. They could not heal, but they could and they did soothe: they could not recall life, but they betokened that love, which gives to life its charm: and all the tender offices you ministered, unable though they were to check the progress of disease, or avert the hand of death, were at once grateful to the object of them, and comforting to the anguished heart which ministered unto them: like the pious services of the faithful to our blessed Lord, they were sanctified by their motive[1].

Let me recall to your recollection the closing day of your daughter's sojourn here; and the instructive scene which it presented. Finding the time of her departure drawing nigh, she prepared, with the deepest humility, and the holiest joy, to partake of "the most comfortable sacrament of the body and blood of Christ"—adding, in the firm and hopeful language of our Liturgy—"This I do 'in remembrance of his meritorious cross and passion, whereby alone I look to obtain remission of my sins, and be made partaker of the kingdom of heaven[2].'" Thus, too, she further

[1] Matt. xxvi. 10. 12, 13. "When Jesus understood it, he said unto them, Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me... For in that she hath poured this ointment upon my body, she did it for my burial. Verily, I say unto you, Wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her." See page 259, note.

[2] I am here forcibly reminded of an occasion, upon which one of the highest personages of the land sought and found in this holy ordinance, a strength to meet every severity of trial which no earthly power could furnish, nor the kingdoms of the world supply. And though many years have since passed*, yet the record is not less instructive, nor the example less forcible. It will be remembered, that in the spring-tide of youth, surrounded by anxious relatives and friends, and the object of the heartfelt prayers of an expecting nation, the late PRINCESS CHARLOTTE of Saxe Coburg died: as did

* November, 1817.

testified her hope—"My blessed Saviour instituted that holy ordinance, when his own death was at hand; I, his unworthy dying servant, trust that mercy may be with me, if I, in the prospect of my death, partake thereof, and as my last act of outward obedience, obey his last command." You will never forget your dear dying daughter at that hour—her more than earthly calm; her serene and collected air; her own tranquillity diffusing itself over the whole scene—long will you remember that scene. The sob of anguish even in your own heart was hushed; and as she took the emblems of her Redeemer's love, *her* voice alone was heard—weak, indeed, and gentle even to faintness, yet distinct and clear—pouring forth its last words of faith, and hope, and thankfulness. "O blessed body, broken for *me!* What strength to my

the infant to which she had given birth. For this sudden wrench from life, however, and from all those earthly blessings which might seem to render life desirable, she had prepared herself, with a wisdom as Christian as it was exemplary. No sooner did she find her trial as a mother approaching, than she strengthened her soul by partaking of the holy Sacrament. She "received the cup of salvation, and called upon the name of the Lord*." Blessed was she in her deed! The grace she so sought was mercifully vouchsafed, according to her need. As her days were, so was her strength. When the event which had been anticipated with joy closed in sorrow, and mother and infant passed from life to death—no murmur escaped her dying lips; no complaining mingled with her prayers; no lingering love of that world which had smiled upon her, found place in her thoughts; the earthly crown which awaited her in this life, she readily resigned, in the view of that heavenly crown which she humbly trusted awaited her in the next; and as she was about to take leave of the world where she would have reigned a queen, every hope centred in her God. As a sinful mortal, her aim was to gain his pardon; as reconciled through the Saviour, her care was to win his favour; as an immortal spirit, her ambition was to secure an immortality of joy; and her last words were in humble submission to his dispensations—"*God's* will be done!"

Behold, then, and see, that, alike to rich and poor, to sovereigns and their subjects, Jesus Christ is the only refuge in the needful time of trouble—but He is a *sure* refuge. The kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, supply not such; yet to royalty and to poverty is it equally free. May we all have grace to seek it!

* Ps. cxvi. 12.

soul! What strength to my faith in God's promise of forgiveness of sin, for his sake! O blessed Blood, shed for *me!* What refreshment to my soul, what brightness to my hope!—Jesus my strength, my hope, my life! O grant!"—and here with clasped and uplifted hands, she raised her look to heaven, with an energy and fervour of which sinking nature had long seemed incapable—"O grant that, being one with Thee spiritually by faith, now, I may be one with Thee hereafter, for ever[1]!"

She felt no anguish then. She *then* shed no tear of sorrow; though the tear of holy—heavenly *joy* glistened full and bright, whilst in a faith, pure as aught of earth can be, she thus partook of the holy supper of the Lord, and applied to her soul its gracious benefits. "Thank God!—Thank God!"—though in tones scarcely audible, yet fell from her lips. Even you, at that moment, appeared as if you could have parted from her without a pang. Your full heart declared your conviction, that she was, indeed, "meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light." She then, as you will remember, reposed, and retired into her own thoughts, which were doubtless with "God and with his Christ." Death, however, was advancing rapidly. Pain had subsided, but her bodily weakness had increased. Still her thoughts were for others. In lamenting her own unworthiness in the sight of God, she warned the young who were around her—"Never do or say any thing to, or *of* others, which in death you will be sorry to have said or done! Think, what will make you

[1] That this spiritual and heavenly union might be perfected by his mediation was the object of the Redeemer's beautiful and affecting prayer, when He committed his Church for ever to the care of his Father.—"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that *they* also may be *one in us*: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me *."

* John xvii. 20, 21.

happy *then:* and *that* do. If I ever have offended any of you, forgive me. You have all been so kind to me, that I have nothing to forgive. I have only to thank you. I do thank you. God ever bless you all!" Seeing you still weeping, she once again rallied what powers remained to her, and with a marvellous firmness, which appeared indicative rather of returning life than approaching dissolution, she thus expressed to you, clearly and distinctly, her hope, and the grounds of it:—"Mother, I am going from you—but not for ever! I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. He will save me. My gracious heavenly Father promises me in my Bible, that He will save those who repent and believe—I repent and believe. If I had my time to come over again, I would pray for grace to make better use of it; and I would love you all even more dearly than I have done. I trust that the Holy Spirit, who comforts me in this hour, will go on to comfort me. Surely He is now speaking peace to me. Else how could I feel *not afraid to die?* Yet, I am not afraid. Oh! bless God for that." . . . . And thus she strove to relieve your deeply-wounded heart by pouring in the balm of her own heavenly hope. The smile which then overspread her countenance, memory will ever cherish—a smile, such as lights not up the eye of *suffering*—suffering was past—a smile it was, so bright, so radiating, that had no word been spoken, no assurance given, of the glorious hope of immortality, that alone might have indicated the hope to be from heaven. Nay, even your own sad heart, for the moment, ceased to grieve. At length, finding her end at hand, she appeared to collect herself for a last effort: an effort, equally noble in its motive, and heroic in its spirit. Forcibly laying aside every selfish consideration, even at that trying moment, she whispered to her attendant—"Turn me round, do not let my mother *see* me die—she could not bear *that*." Thinking that she slept, all were silent: nor was the silence disturbed, save that twice her failing voice

uttered—"O Mother! I am happy!—dear Mother! —happy!" . . . And her spirit returned to the God who gave it.

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## CHAPTER LII.

### THE MEETING OF THE BLESSED.

"SHALL we then meet again? Shall the dear one again call me, Mother? Shall the eye, whose smile of affection so often greeted me here, again welcome me? And shall we live together again in peace and in joy?"—How natural these reflections to a mourning parent! and how blessed the Divine word, which gives assurance that the hope they breathe shall, to the righteous, be realized! The assurance is express, that the dead body shall be raised to life; that the spirit, separated by death, shall again be united with it; that, so renewed, each individual shall know death no more, but "be for ever with the Lord." Yes! weeping mother, thy child shall rise to new life, in the resurrection at the last day; for she believed in Jesus Christ, the Lord of life; and believing in Him, "though she were dead, yet shall she live." "Thy brother shall rise again;" said the Son of God to the afflicted sister of Lazarus. And what if, on that occasion, the promise was fulfilled after the dead had lain in its grave only four days, whereas long ages may pass, ere the last trumpet summon from the grave the dead *you* mourn?—the promise is not less sure. Nay, if *they* to whom our blessed Lord so addressed Himself were to receive the doctrine in the simplicity of an unreserved faith, with how firm a faith should *we* receive it! He, who spake the words in life, Himself after death rose from the dead by his own power, "the first-fruits of them that slept;" thereby establishing the truth of his promise, and the extent of his power

to fulfil it. In this, as in all cases, bear in mind that since even to ourselves, when we have passed into the eternal world, there will be time no longer, so now, with the eternal God, time is as nothing. The very term itself is merely adapted to the limited capacities of finite beings, and can never be applicable to the Divine counsels and Divine perfections. The disembodied spirits in paradise are happy with their kindred spirits—"the spirits of the just made perfect"—and await with patient hope the appointed hour which shall perfect their bliss, and restore them, glorified, to their home in heaven. The grave, then, shall not for ever hold thy loved one captive. "The hour is coming, in the which *all* that are in their graves shall come forth [1]." And the Spirit of God has *thus* revealed the wonders of that hour. "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." As you ponder truths so high, so glorious, you scarcely need the apostolic exhortation which follows them—"Comfort one another with these words [2]." How often during

[1] John v. 28, 29.

[2] 1 Thess. iv. 16—18. Few points are more strongly insisted upon in the discourses of our gracious Redeemer, as a motive for watchfulness in our lives and conduct, than the fact that the great judgment-day will come upon mankind, as the flood did, *suddenly*, when they least expect it, and are engaged in all the busy bustle of the world and its concerns. And as the dead shall then be raised to life, so those who are then alive—or *quick*, as the living are sometimes termed in Scripture *—will be changed *without death*, and rendered immortal.

It was probably to prepare the human mind for the reception of

* Thus Numb. xvi. 30—33, the presumption of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, was *signally* punished; in that when the Lord commanded the earth to swallow up them and their families, they went down—"*quick*"—that is, *alive*—"into the pit." See also Ps. lv. 15, and cxxiv. 3.

her sickness did you and your loved daughter so comfort one another? How often did you weigh the inestimable value of the blessing contained in those words, and strive to reconcile each the other to the parting for a season, by faith in the promised meeting when you shall part no more. Your faith, I trust, fails not. Marvellous indeed is the thought, that our bodies, which, when dead, gradually become corrupt, and at last return to their dust, should be formed anew; become "like unto Christ's glorious body;" and, like his, be capable of ascending up into heaven, to die no more. But is it not equally marvellous—equally beyond our faculties to comprehend, how man should have been first formed from the same dust, and from age to age, through long generations of his kind, been sustained by the food thereunto appointed? The closer we reason upon the facts by which the providence of God surrounds us in the natural world, the more unhesitating will be our faith in the mysteries which his word of grace reveals in the spiritual world. The same power which first called man's body into being, and ordained his existence in this present state for a season, can again call his body into being, and ordain his existence in a future state for ever. Still further to strengthen our faith in this truth, God has spread over the whole of nature, animate and inanimate, ample proofs, that his power is constantly operative in reproducing whatever, as part of a fallen world, for a season yields to death. When in early spring, the voice of THE INVISIBLE bids nature awake from its death-like torpor: and when, obedient to the bidding, the tree shoots forth its leaves, and the plant its blossoms—say, is there not a rising of what had for a time been dead? and shall we limit our faith in that Divine power to the work we see *accomplished?* Shall we not rather extend it to the work we find *pro-*

this truth, that Enoch before the law, and Elijah under the law, passed to heaven, *quick*—that is, alive, without the intermediate step of death.

*mised;* and believe that the same God will raise us also from the dead? Surely this is the proper exercise of a faith, which, though it be, essentially, "the evidence of things *not* seen," finds ample ground whereon upon this subject to take its stand, in the evidence of things which *are* seen.

If, with this object in view, we contemplate the Creator's works in the natural world, no part of creation will be uninstructive; but each will come in aid of our faith in the word of the same great Being, who is alike the God of nature and of grace. How beautifully St. Paul points out this truth, as a ground of consolation to those who, like you, mourn some loved one, snatched away by death—you must well remember—"That which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body which shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body!"—"So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body."—"And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly[1]." These words of glorious

[1] 1 Cor. xv. 36, &c.

He must be indeed a weak caviller who would limit to the act he sees, the power which effects it. The faithful Christian needs neither illustration nor analogy whereon to rest his assured faith in the resurrection. That is founded immovably upon the word of God, and the power of his Christ. But he gladly cheers that faith, by contemplating the Divine works analogous to, or illustrative of, the doctrine; and the more boldly repels the attacks of scepticism, by the unanswerable question of the Apostle: "Why should it be thought a thing *incredible* with you that God should raise the dead?" . . . . Is it at all incredible that God, who created man in the beginning of the world, should recreate him at the close of it? Is it incredible that He, who framed Adam from the dust of the ground, should frame him anew out of the dust, into which his earthly body shall have returned? Is it incredible that *He*, who year by year calls into new life the powers of nature,

promise are still fresh in your recollection. You heard them during the solemn service for the dead; in a holy hour, when your heart was softened by sorrow, and the heavenly truths they conveyed sunk deep into it. Behold the very grain which man soweth; it perisheth—corrupteth—and cometh to an end. But lo! out of this death springeth life! from this corruption cometh forth purity! and from the mortified mass, there ariseth in full beauty a glorious plant; fit emblem of that change which awaiteth the dead! when "this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal, immortality." The very blossoms with which you strewed your daughter's grave, whilst they figured indeed that she drooped and withered and was cut down like a flower, figured also her resurrection to a new life of brighter joys and happier seasons—where, planted by the waters of life, she shall flourish for ever; no more to wither, no more to change; but live pure, and bright, and glorious, through the endless ages of eternity.

sealed as in death; that *He*, who is every hour reproducing throughout creation that which by the law of death hath for a time perished—is it incredible that He should exercise that power upon man, the noblest of his creatures? Or, shall the inanimate plant, after death, know its resurrection, and man be left to know *only* death? Shall the perishing insect tribes be changed from vile bodies, that they may in new bodies be clothed with beauty, and, from creeping things on earth, mount into a new element in winged splendour, whilst immortal man turns to his dust, and becomes less than the worm which destroyeth his mortal body? Shall the Divine power to change from corruption to incorruption be thus graciously vouchsafed and daily present itself to your view in all creation around you, and you yet continue doubting, questioning, cavilling? Go, vain, foolish caviller! Pluck from thine heart the love of sin, and we shall soon find thee gratefully to receive the love of God. Resolve to *obey* the pure and holy precepts of the Gospel, and we shall see an end of thy cavilling. Thou art a sceptic, not because faith, in itself, offends thy reason, but because its requisitions either offend thy pride, or condemn thy practice.

## CHAPTER LIII.

### THE DYING MOTHER'S FAITH.

It was the marked and emphatic admonition of our Divine Teacher, that not content merely to *read* the Scriptures, we should "*search*" them; that so we might learn—as far as our limited powers are capable of learning—the *whole* counsel of God. And whoso thus searcheth those hidden treasures, will find few considerations to affect his heart with a deeper sense of gratitude and wonder than *this*—that they reveal to us the Lord of all as regarding with the minutest and most watchful care, the welfare of each individual of us his creatures, not only in reference to our future and eternal state, but in respect also to our fears and hopes in this *present* life. So widely extended is this care, that for every outward evil to which a varied life is exposed, He has provided a specific remedy. The "Angel of the covenant," touched with all the feelings of our infirmities, identifies Himself, as it were, with us in all those wants and wishes, all those fears and hopes, all those sorrows and joys, which, springing out of the several relations of social life, alternate with the changing tide of this fluctuating world, and constitute our probation. Where is the sorrow which He shares not? Where the grief in which He does not sympathize? Nay, not only "in all our affliction *he* is afflicted[1]," but in every affliction He is at hand to supply its appropriate relief. Not only, if we be wearied and heavy laden with the burden of our sins, does He, as having borne our sins, take the burden from us, and give rest—not only, if we be poor and

[1] Isa. lxiii. 9.

in misery, does He supply the riches of his grace, which waste not, and the blessing of his peace, which faileth not[1]—not only when death approaches, does He calm all fear for *ourselves,* by the assurance that He is the resurrection and the life, and hath conquered death for us—but when our dying hour is saddened by fears for *those we leave* behind, even *then* does his voice speak comfort—"Behold," saith He, "in ME, a Father of the fatherless, a God of the widow:" thus permitting us to cast *all* our care upon *Him.*

That *nature* has these fears, who can wonder?—That *Faith* in this view of Divine love can conquer them, the following narrative may testify. The occasion was one, never to be forgotten by those who witnessed it; nor can it ever be remembered by them without the most lively feelings of gratitude, for the blessing of an example which might encourage the most desponding, and comfort the most afflicted. A Mother, in the prime of life, and, as far as human apprehension could judge, in the mid-day of usefulness, was seized with a sickness unto death, and felt that she was called to set her house in order. The call was startling; for though never presumptuously reckoning upon health or life, she had thought yet to live, blessing and being blessed, till age should lead her gently to the grave. As a wife, a mother, and a friend, she fulfilled every duty with a ready zeal, and a patience in well-doing, and an habitual self-denial which indicated, by signs unequivocal, that in all her actions and in all her thoughts, that right spirit dwelt, for the daily *renewing* of which she had, in the sincerity of her own conscious unworthiness before God, offered her daily prayer[2]. Her heart was laid open by her conduct: and what her faith was, her works did show[3]. This faith was now to be tried to the uttermost. The world was to be re-

[1] John xiv. 27.

[2] See the Collect for Christmas Day.

[3] James ii. 17.

signed—not its pleasures only; from those she had long withdrawn—she was now called to resign its duties; and for these only she had lately lived. Thus summoned away, and convinced that death had set his seal upon her, not only did she seek and find refuge in her God, as a Redeemer; but as she looked around upon her husband and children and assembled family—her eye resting on the children whom she was so soon to leave, and her fond heart sinking at the thought that no longer would they have her anxious care, no longer find shelter under her wing, no longer be cheered by her smile, and made happy by her love—every fear was conquered, by remembering that the same God had revealed Himself, as "the Father of the fatherless, that defendeth the cause of widows—even God in his holy habitation[1]." How firmly she relied upon this gracious assurance, she thus—though at intervals, and as strength permitted—gave her full and grateful testimony. "In the prospect of leaving you all—all so dear to me—you cannot doubt but that my love increases more and more, as the parting hour draws nearer: yet I feel that God, as He gives me grace to approach death without dread, gives me grace also to resign life and you, without a murmur or a fear. No, not even for you my weeping children—though if ever a parent's heart would *naturally* dread for surviving children the perilous trials of a wicked world, it must be in an hour like this—yet, not even for you, dare I doubt or fear. And I will tell you in one word from what my resignation is derived—even from *Faith.*

"But first, as to my own soul. Faith then is my shield against the terrors of death. I firmly believe, that the *Almighty* 'is my stronghold whereunto I may *alway* resort:' 'He hath holden me up ever since I was born.' Being blessed, in these my last hours, with a clear mind to discern the truth, and remember-

[1] Ps. lxviii. 5.

ing, as I do, the years of old, through the trials of which his hand did bear me safely; I judge of what He *will* do by what He *has* done: and I can never suppose that his loving-mercy, which has hitherto followed me all the days of my life, will be withdrawn from me *now*, when I need it most. That were to forget the perfections of an unchanging God. His love is always the same. Hence, I believe firmly that He will not forsake me *now*. 'Going forth,' therefore, to death, 'in the strength of the Lord God[1],' I have no dread. My courage is strong. My hope is bright. And this observe, not in a spirit of presumption: *Jesus Christ* is the Lord *my righteousness;* and 'I make mention of *his* righteousness only.' Mine own unrighteousness has been, and to the end must be my heavy burden; nay, it would be heavier than I could bear, but here again faith sustains me: I believe that Jesus Christ has borne it for me[2]. Believing his word, I 'cast my burden upon the Lord:' and I know that 'he will sustain me.' Have I not this very day partaken of the holy communion of his blessed body and blood? And did I not then seal this faith with the blood of the everlasting covenant? Do I not know that the death I then commemorated was suffered for *me*[3]*?* And oh! my Saviour, did not my soul thank thee? Did not hope bid me look to the hour when I should soon drink that cup new with Thee, in thy Father's kingdom? What a clearing of the mind and judgment does the prospect of death give me! Now that 'the one thing needful' so forcibly demands my attention, I am free to judge myself. I understand now, better than ever I before understood, how merciful, as well as wise, is the command that we should 'judge ourselves, that we be not judged of the Lord.' *Not* that we are to escape his judgment, for 'all must stand before the judgment-seat of God;' but that if we first judge

[1] Ps. lxxi. 14. [2] 1 Pet. ii. 24. [3] See page 209.

ourselves, and *so* stand convicted, we flee for succour gladly and even eagerly to the Saviour, who is our only Advocate with the great Judge of all men, and who alone can successfully plead our cause with Him. Thus I can *now* see many things to have been wrong in my conduct, which before-time I thought nothing of. Surely, it is the world—acting upon the infirmities of our nature: exciting vain fears on the one hand, and vain hopes on the other; pandering to our self-love, and enticing us from the love of God—which weakens our powers of judging and acting. But with the world I have now little to do, nothing indeed, as far as I am individually concerned; except to bear with patience whatever pain and sickness my heavenly Father may see fit to lay upon me. Whilst therefore I am free to judge myself fairly, by the law of the Gospel of my blessed Saviour; and under even my own judgment, feel all my unworthiness in the sight of a perfectly holy God; faith in the atoning blood of the Sacrifice of the Lamb of God is so strong that I fear no evil. I fear not. I have placed in my very heart the glorious words—'The blood of Christ cleanseth from *all* sin.' "

After an interval of repose, during which she seemed to be in a closer and more earnest communion with her God, she resumed her converse; edifying, as though a voice from the grave had spoken . . . . "I feel that Death has set his seal upon me. Soon—soon indeed must we part. I repeat again and again, that in the prospect of this parting, my love glows towards my dear ones more and more intensely; and still, though I see you all weeping around me, I can shed no tear. Yet it is no unfeeling disregard for your love—no want of gratitude for your sympathy, which gives me this calmness. *Faith* it is, which here also sustains me—a triumphant faith in the promise of the Almighty, that He will not only wash my soul pure in the blood of the sacrifice of his Son, and prepare it for heaven by the sanctification of his Spirit; but will

accomplish in all its fulness his own solemn promise to be a Father of the fatherless, and a God of the widow—God, infinite in power as in love. My trust is on that promise; *therefore* am I not moved; *therefore* is not my heart afraid; *therefore* it is that I dare not have aught of lingering fear, as to this world's trials, even for you. Husband—children—all you dear ones! See now, I am leaving you to the care of a *heavenly* Guide, a *heavenly* Companion, a *heavenly* Protector. *His* power to protect and comfort you all, is as much above my poor power to render you service, as heaven is higher than earth, the Creator than his creatures, and the Lord of all above dust and ashes! Yes! my children—Almighty God will be as a mother to the motherless; whilst to the desolate He saith, 'I am for you, I will turn unto you [1].' Husband—mark *that!* Almighty God is the friend of the desolate. How often, in reading my Bible, have I paused upon the many affecting passages where this tender parental love of God towards children, and his anxious sympathizing care for the mourners in their desolateness, are assured to us in a spirit of mercy, which might encourage the most desponding. 'Ye shall not afflict any widow or fatherless child.' 'He'—the great Jehovah, who dwelleth in heaven, and ruleth upon earth—even '*He* doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow [2].' Bearing in mind these promises, I pray that my faith in them may be strengthened, because my Saviour hath taught me, that according to my faith, so will it be unto me. How can I not unreservedly trust my God, who to his command hath added his promise?—'Leave thy fatherless children, *I* will *preserve* them alive; and let thy widows trust in *me* [3].' Memory recalls the further assurance, that the mother should sooner 'forget her sucking child,' than God forget those who trust in Him [4].

[1] Ezek. xxxvi. 9.
[2] Deut. x. 18.
[3] Jer. xlix. 11.
[4] Isa. xlix. 15.

Blessed words of my all-merciful Father! . . . How impossible it is for a nursing mother to forget, for one moment, the treasure she clasps to her bosom, as she nourishes her infant child—*I* well know. Still less can God ever forget his servants who trust in Him. Observe, what grace is given me to cast *all* my care upon Him! . . . Thus, my judgment cleared to the comparative value of this world and the next, I can fairly separate what I would leave, and what I would take with me. Let me tell you what I wish to take with me. I wish to take with me—an acceptable faith in Christ my Redeemer; a pure and undivided love to God my heavenly Father; and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost the Comforter—because then I hope my soul may be found at last, pure, through the blood of the righteous sacrifice; admitted to its home in heaven; and sanctified for ever to the service of the Lord. All the rest I am now well content to leave under the gracious care of infinite love, and infinite power. . . . Husband, and children, and all my dear friends—listen to me—*now*—for soon my life will fail me. Already my strength weakens every minute. My last counsel to you all is, that whenever fears and doubts and sorrows afflict you, 'be strong in the Lord, and in the power of *his* might.' Do as I am now doing in this my last awful trial—'Draw nigh unto God,' and 'cast all your care upon him.' Live the life of the righteous, and you may hope to die the death of the righteous: then you, O beloved companion of my earthly pilgrimage, the partner of my life, the sharer of my sorrows and my joys—you, and our dear children, and friends, *all* may meet again! Oh! how joyfully shall I welcome you all—to share with me my rest in heaven!"

Having requested to be left again to her quietude, she patiently awaited her summons to the grave. With weakening voice, her lips yet whispered one of her cherished passages in Scripture—"'Ye shall reap if ye faint not;'" adding, "O Thou, the strength of

*all* who put their trust in Thee, strengthen *me!* confirm my faith unto the end!" The sublime language of our Liturgy then occurred to her—"'O God most mighty! O holy and merciful Saviour, thou most worthy Judge eternal; suffer me not, at my last hour, for any pains of death, to fall from Thee!'" The mind appeared to be clearer and clearer, as she was about to be freed from mortality. After a lengthened pause, she questioned those friends who still watched her—"How shall I know when death is really come? What a thought it is, that, perhaps, ere another hour has gone by, I shall have passed into the regions of space, and be winging my way to the mansions of peace. Jesus has said, that He is 'gone to prepare a place for me[1].' Do you suppose that angels will guide me? Angels were the guides to Lazarus, and conducted him to Abraham's bosom in Paradise."——To this question there could be but one answer—"Have faith in God. He Himself is with you, and by what intermediate agency He may conduct the freed spirit to its rest, we may safely leave to Him. The veil of futurity is not to be raised by mortal hand. The knowledge which would then be revealed to us is too high for our present faculties to apprehend. Jesus has well warned us, that these are beyond our grasp: 'Ye cannot bear them now.'"—Her reply was striking! "True; You are right. But angels are so often spoken of in Scripture, both in the Old and New Testament, as ministering to the people of God in their more special trials, that it is natural to think they may attend us when we are dying, and be our guides to the next world. Besides, though yet I see no angel-forms awaiting me, it does not follow that I may not see them, when I shall be quite free from my body. *You* will not see my spirit, when it leaves this room, but it will nevertheless pass you, and be in your presence, though your mortal eyes shall be holden, that you

[1] John xiv. 2; also John xvii. 24.

cannot discern it[1]. So I will encourage the hope that angels may be around me now, though I see them not; and that when I leave the body, I shall find them awaiting me. But—no matter *that!* *God* is present: *He* will sustain me in my passage through 'the valley of the shadow of death;' and *He* is—*all* in ALL!" At length the moment of dissolution approached; "O! now!—*now!*—Death is come!" . . . Death *did* come:

[1] There is a passage in the history of the prophet Balaam, which in no small degree strengthens the hope here thrown out. We must ever remember, indeed, that the occasion was marked by a miracle; still, the circumstances there revealed prove this fact, that as to the high and holy things of the spiritual world, the Creator can vouchsafe to his creatures at one time a degree of knowledge, which is withheld at other times. We read, that when the wicked prophet was pursuing his way, with a mind filled with evil projects against the people of God, he for some time discerned not an "angel of the Lord, which stood in the way, for an adversary against him;" but no sooner had "the Lord opened the eyes of Balaam," than "he saw the angel of the Lord, standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand:" the guardian angel of God's people; to turn aside from his deadly purpose their fierce and powerful foe. Why should we doubt but that when "our last enemy," Death, shall assail *us*, angels may then also interpose their aid, and shield us from his terrors; though our eyes as yet be holden, that we see them not*?

The whole of the narrative is replete with instruction. We learn from it, that there is an ever-present and an ever-watchful God, ministering by unseen agents, to the protection and support of his Church and people—his faithful Israel—restraining the wicked, and protecting the righteous: nay, "making the fierceness of man to turn to his praise," changing contempt into honour, and turning curse into blessing. We see that Great Being, by the power of his will, confounding the wisdom of the wise, when directed against his honour; and by making the "dumb ass to speak with man's voice," words of rebuke to his lordly rider, laughing to scorn man's presumption. We see also, that He alone is the Author and Giver of all our powers, physical and intellectual; for who but the Giver of them could so confound, or extend, or transfer them at his pleasure?——We learn further, that though we discern them not *now*, we are surrounded by spiritual intelligences, which by Jehovah's ordinances are at hand, for the "punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well." Our eyes may not always be thus holden: and this of a surety we do know, that hereafter even we, now vile earth and miserable sinners, shall, if admitted into the number of the redeemed, be ourselves made like unto the angels in heaven.

* Numb. xxii. 22. 31.

but without his terrors. His approach was met by a smile, which seemed rather the welcoming of angel-messengers, than of a tyrant king—the hailing of some friend long looked for; some bliss unimagined. The expanded eye, full, as if struck with some wondrous sight, and bright, even to dazzling, gleamed with a joy all unearthly. Nought of earth could have called up a look so piercing. It was as though her soul, in the last moments of its hovering on this lower world, thence looked out into the world of spirits, spread before it; saw there, with mingled amazement and delight, the kindred spirits of the disembodied just welcoming her; for one fleeting moment viewed even from earth the glorious joys of heaven; and then breathed life away—the hope, long-cherished, realized; the victory, long fought for, won; and heaven, long prayed for—who can doubt that it was gained? . . . .

"Where now is the mind which, a few hours since, reasoned so wisely and so well? Where the voice, which then so eloquently, even in death, proclaimed the triumph of a Christian faith, and the glories of a Christian hope? In what new scenes is the spirit expatiating? How enlarged its powers! How passing wonder the objects on which they are exercised!" . . . . Such, doubtless, were the solemn musings of those who witnessed this parting! Such may be our meditations now! Salutary they are, and the source of high and heavenly thoughts; elevating the soul to a more hearty devotion of all its powers to God here; in the animating hope of being hereafter admitted into heaven, and there serving Him for ever; whilst upon the heart of each sorrowing survivor, the deep and anxious reflection presses—"Thus, too, must *I* die! Thus must *I* surrender up my soul to Him who created me—Him who will judge me! Thus, too, must *I* pass into new and eternal scenes—O mighty God!—O merciful Saviour!—O gracious Comforter! prepare me for that hour!"

## CHAPTER LIV.

### RECOGNITION IN THE WORLD OF SPIRITS.

"LET not your heart be troubled. I go to prepare a place for you; that where *I* am, there *ye* may be also[1]."—Thus did the Son of man comfort the hearts of those who were soon to mourn his death. They were to meet Him again; knowing, and being known in a future state of being, even as in this: and though deeply would they grieve his death, the certainty thus assured to them of their mutual recognition in heaven, each in his identity, was so far to mitigate their grief, that they were "not to sorrow as others without hope." Nor can we forbear to ponder with gratitude the provident care with which our Lord *timed* his consolatory assurance, that in heaven the faithful disciple and the loved Master should together find their rest. He revealed this truth *before* He suffered—before, therefore, those for whose benefit it was vouchsafed were called upon to apply to its aid as mourners: for under *recent* loss, the ear is often deaf to sympathy. Grieved as they were in the prospect of losing Him, they were not as yet under the stunning blow of separation by death, and consequently were free, duly to estimate the value of such a truth, and admit it fully into their hearts, as a treasure in time

[1] John xiv. 1—3. Our Lord kept the same subject in view, when He held forth to his disciples the further promise—a promise which might more than satisfy the aspirations of the most ambitious—that when He should Himself "sit on the throne of his glory, they also should sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel*." What higher encouragement could his followers desire, for a course of patience under trial here, than such an assurance of reunion with Him, and with each other in their identity hereafter?

* Matt. xix. 28.

of need. He was well aware, that in deep and overwhelming distress, the mind is often powerless to lay hold even of the comfort set before it; and sinks at once, unless *prepared* to meet woe by having secured its appropriate relief. Further, we are to be grateful for the plain and intelligible terms in which our Divine Teacher has conveyed his consolation. Himself "touched with the feeling of our infirmities," He could well understand that the mind, when heavily oppressed by grief, and agitated by severe affliction, is unequal to draw comfort from the finer reductions of reason, or from the clearest result of argument: and rather falls back at once upon such aid as the plain promises, and simply declared truths, like that now recorded for our learning, do so amply and so happily supply. Thankful enough we can never be, that by this assurance, so graciously given by our blessed Lord, all those precious hopes of the dying, all those fond anticipations of survivors, to which we cling when death is about to part us, are confirmed for ever. If in a future world there is to be a recognition in their identity of the more immediate disciples of our Lord, we cannot doubt there will be a similar recognition of *all* the families of the righteous, through the redemption which is in Him. And since none can gainsay this truth, the view of happiness which it opens may well brighten every passing hour which brings us nearer to that world, where it will be realized: whilst the mourner, as he still plods on his weary pilgrimage, may now look joyfully to its close. How often, when, by some unlooked-for association of the present with the past, the fountain of grief is opened afresh in the mourner's heart, and tears bedew the memory of some former scene, whose brightness was the presence of those, now laid in the grave! . . . how often, on such occasions, may the current of bitter thought be checked, by the brief but animating reflection—"Away these sorrows! We shall meet again!"

The more attentively we read the word of God, the more surely shall we confirm all the fond wishes which the Christian's heart cherishes, on a subject so dear to him. Thus the transfiguration of our Lord —a scene opening to us in some degree the glories of heaven—is in striking evidence of the fact. When Moses and Elias appeared on that occasion, and conversed with Jesus, the main object of their appearance was, doubtless, to show that the authority of the legal and prophetical dispensations was to merge in the Gospel[1]: yet it also proves incontestably, that there will be a mutual recognition of mankind, even in the world of spirits. Why did Peter so immediately propose to build tabernacles on the mount, not only for his Divine Master, but for Moses and Elias, unless he had recognized in their identity the prophet and the lawgiver? Indeed, *search* we but the Scriptures, and we shall find them so marvellously confirming this truth, that every page will tend to strengthen our faith, and brighten our hope. It is true that our Lord in his discourses with his disciples and others, who directed their inquiries as to the nature of a future state, discouraged vain curiosity, and checked all presumption, as well by withholding any but general views of a subject so spiritual, as by his admonitory and sometimes even reproachful replies to the vain questions of the curious[2], or the lower wishes of the worldly. He has intimated, however, at various times, and with a clearness which the aching heart knows well to estimate, that the families of the faithful upon

[1] This is plain from the express declaration of a voice from heaven, which evidently disannulled the authority of former dispensations, by demanding that all men should henceforth look for Divine guidance to the Son of God—"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: *Hear ye* HIM* !"

[2] Witness our Lord's memorable rebuke to Salome, upon her ambitious demand on behalf of her two sons. Matt. xx. 20—23.

* Matt. xvii. 5. So St. Paul, Heb. i. 1.

earth shall meet as the families of the blessed in heaven. Thus, when, in arguing with the Sadducees "touching the resurrection of the dead," He reminds them of Jehovah's declaration respecting Himself, as the "God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob," He asserts of Jehovah, that He is "not a God of the dead, but of the living [1]." Hence we draw the inevitable conclusion, that therefore the Patriarchs are living, though in the world of spirits, and will live with their God for ever: each one in his own identity.

Still more clear is it, that this identity will be preserved in the final gathering of mankind at the general resurrection at the last day; when we shall be "raised" from the grave, "spiritual bodies [2]," and "*this* mortal shall put on immortality [3]." To this point we are specially directed by those discourses of our blessed Redeemer, which are connected with the subject in question. When risen from the dead, as the "second Adam," by whom "came to man the resurrection from the dead," with what earnestness did He impress upon his disciples this very truth. It is a striking fact, that He *then* called their attention, not so much to his office or authority, or even to his appearance in the body generally, as to his being really in the *same* body, in which they had known Him before his death. He not only bade them ascertain that He had risen from the grave, clothed with a

[1] Matt. xxii. 32.

[2] 1 Cor. xv. 44.

[3] 1 Cor. xv. 53. "*This* mortal shall put on immortality"—the very expression indicating our identity with sufficient clearness. But the indication becomes still clearer, when we refer to the passage in the original. The words there convey a fuller meaning—"*This very* mortal body, *itself*, shall put on immortality!" And what though such be the wondrous changes by which our frames are acted upon, that in reality we do not have the same absolute substance in manhood as in youth; in age, as in manhood; and therefore at different periods of our existence, the same form does not contain the same matter, no one considers himself therefore a different person, at different stages of his life: he is still the same person as to his identity. So will it be at the resurrection of the dead.

body—"Handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have;" but He also willed that they convinced themselves by absolute testimony—the testimony of their own senses—that the body in which He had risen, was the *very same body* which He had previously borne, and in which they had known Him in life: "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is *I myself*[1]." Now, if according to the express declaration of St. Paul, touching the resurrection of the body, "as in Adam *all* die, even *so* in Christ shall *all* be made alive[2]," is it not beyond contradiction, that we shall rise in our identity? the righteous and the wicked; each for their final recompense?—the conclusion seems unavoidable[3].

Long ages, indeed, before the Gospel thus enlightened mankind, the same truth was cherished by the faithful. Witness for instance the course pursued by David, when the Lord struck with death "the child that Uriah's wife bare unto him." How are we to account for the contrariety and apparent inconsistency, evidenced by David on that occasion? During the child's sickness, there was mourning, lamentation, and woe: at his death, there was a calm and cheerful acquiescence in the event! To what else must we trace this affecting change of demeanour, than to the prospect of their reunion in a future world, and a blessed recognition there?—"And David said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said,

[1] Luke xxiv. 39. These memorable words were addressed by Christ to his eleven Apostles—the representatives of his Church; and being addressed to them, are recorded for the instruction and comfort of the faithful members of that Church, till time itself shall be no longer.

[2] 1 Cor. xv. 22.

[3] The reader is again referred to the parable of Dives and Lazarus, by which it is put beyond a doubt, that the impenitent will know in a future state, the sharers of their interminable misery—else why did Dives find added tortures to his soul, in the fearful anticipation of beholding his *five brethren* in the "place of torment?" The inference is plain, that so also the righteous shall then know the partakers of their joy.

Who can tell whether God will be gracious to me, that the child may live? But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? Can I bring him back again? *I* shall go to *him*, but he will not return to me[1]." The darkness of the present was dispelled by the brightness of the future. The loved one was at rest; and they should meet again. This thought it was, which not only rendered submission to the Divine will deep and perfect—*that* it was before: witness the supplications of the monarch, in which he cast all his care upon God!—at once changed sorrow and mourning into joy. Submission was now lightened by hope, and the mourner went on his way rejoicing.—Take the opposite view of the subject, and we become at once perplexed and confounded: all this pious care would seem to want a fit object. Why care for that which is to be resolved into its original element, and become only dust? Whereas, once let us be convinced of this recognition of kindred, and all is clear and intelligible; encouraging and comforting.

Nor can it be, that these hopes as to our knowledge of each other in a future state are at all weakened by our Lord's memorable declaration, "that in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven." That truth He uttered to meet a particular occasion, and to confound the sophistry of the infidels by whom He was then surrounded[2]. It would by no means

[1] 2 Sam. xii. 22, 23.

[2] Matt. xxii. 30. "For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven."—But this truth was declared by the Saviour, to meet a particular occasion: to correct the false views of the Sadducees with whom He was conversing; and, if possible, to shame their infidelity, "which say there is no resurrection." They came to the conference, thinking to show, by their false reasoning, that the notion of a resurrection of the body was absurd; since they took it for granted as a necessary consequence, that if there were *any* resurrection, *that* resurrection must be in personal identity; and with mutual recognition: indeed, however they chose to impugn the doctrine of the resurrection itself, they made no pretence of denying identity and recognition, as

warrant us in concluding, that all the sweet charities of life which have arisen from the holy ordinance of marriage, and which now, in their several degrees of near or distant kindred, meliorate our condition in this lower world, will be swept away from memory. So far from this being the case, we should rather

inevitable consequences of the doctrine, could it be established. They therefore adduced—what they expected would have proved conclusive in their favour—the extreme case of a person, who, in conformity with the Jewish law, provided for such emergency, had been married in succession to seven brethren : the six former having been severally removed by death. They argued thus :—Suppose this resurrection to be possible—all mankind rising in their identity, and with mutual recognition, as in life—*then* tell us, if you can, "In the resurrection, whose wife shall she be of the seven ?" The question they put, appeared, to their own minds, perfectly unanswerable ; because their minds were of earthly stamp, and of earthly views*. They were blind to the great end for which God created man. How dignified is our Lord's rebuke of their ignorance ! How noble the view of truth, by which He puts to silence their ignorance ! "Ye do err ; not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven." The thoughts of these Sadducees were set on worldly wisdom, and confined to earthly things. They thought "God was such an one as themselves." But the believer in the Scriptures raises his view to heaven, whilst his heart fills with joy and gratitude to that Divine love, which in those Scriptures assure him that he will rise from the grave in his body, and be made "equal unto the angels †." God having then "accomplished the number of his elect ‡," and the servants of God then experiencing no diminution in their number—for "there shall then be no more death : neither can they die any more," saith the Lord, "they are equal unto the angels." —Therefore the institution of marriage will cease with its necessity. The love, however, and affection, which united kindred souls here on earth, cease *not* ; they form part of that heaven-born charity, which never faileth ; but which in a purer and holier state of being, shall unite us in closer bonds with each other and with God.

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* When the Sadducees thus speak of the resurrection, we must understand that they do not allow that there will be a resurrection. They merely admitted the premises for argument sake : as if they had said, "Well, now, *suppose* there be, as you affirm there will be, a resurrection of the dead, whose wife shall she *then* be ?"—Subtle reasoners very commonly adopt this mode of arguing. On the present occasion the added cunning of these reasoners did but cause them deeper shame.

† Luke xx. 36.

‡ Matt. xxiv. 31. See also the Service for the Burial of the Dead.

conclude, that the manifold endearing ties of relationship, thence flowing, having been by Himself honoured and sanctified [1], they will *there* surely find entrance, whither He is gone before, to prepare a place for us. The love, and affection, and good-will, and all the kindly feelings we have borne towards each other here, constituting as they do part of that heavenly charity which never faileth, shall endure for ever in angelic purity, and Divine perfection; for all will then have undergone a blessed change, the extent of which it were impossible for us now adequately to conceive; and our thoughts will then be high and holy, far beyond our present intellectual powers to apprehend. Nay, if our vile and corruptible bodies shall put on glory, what shall be the brightness of that glory with which our souls shall then be clothed, when, restored to our home in heaven, we shall "shine like the brightness of the firmament, and as stars for ever," "even as the sun, in the kingdom of our Father [2]?"

To argue against this view of the subject, or to check the cherished hopes to which it gives rise, because we cannot now comprehend how there can be, in the resurrection of the dead, individual recognition, and distinction of families amid the countless and mingled families of mankind, then to be gathered together, is to reason as if our present faculties were for ever to remain, as they now are, limited. To

[1] If proof were needed in confirmation of this view of the case, we have it in the memorable words wherein Jesus referred to those sacred affections, as in themselves signs of the tender love which He bare to his disciples. For when, in the midst of his discourse with the people He was interrupted by one, who announced to Him, that his "mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him!" He turned the occasion, not to the instruction only of his followers, but to their encouragement and consolation —"And he stretched forth his hand towards his disciples, and said, Behold my mother, and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother *."

[2] Dan. xii. 3. Matt. xiii. 43. Rev. vii. 15. Rev. v. 13.

* Matt. xii. 49, 50.

a degree, indeed, they must always have limit, as compared with Him, who alone is infinite, and who, when He breathed into man the breath of life, gave to his creature what measure of power and knowledge He willed. We must not, however, forget his promise, so to *extend* our power and knowledge in a future state, that man shall not only be as "the angels which are in heaven," but "shall know God" Himself, "even as he is known." Moreover, let us never forget the heart-stirring encouragement of our Divine Master, to the servant who had been *faithful* over a *few* things—"I will make thee ruler over *many* things[1];" added authority being vouchsafed, not according to the extent or capacity, but according to a well-tried application of it. *Power* will be given *then*, apportioned to our *faithfulness now*.

Away, then, with doubts and fears, which are adapted rather to the lower views of a worldly mind, and suit well the sceptic and the infidel, who *dare not* look to immortality; but which ill become those whose conversation in earth may yet be as in heaven[2], and who, ere long, shall be endued with new powers, and live for ever with angels, and with God!

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## CHAPTER LV.

### CONCLUSION.

If the reader has thus far patiently borne with my endeavour to lead him to a closer acquaintance with God, I trust that his time will not have been misapplied. Certain it is, that if, as his attention has been awakened to the subjects brought before him, he

[1] Matt. xxv. 23.

[2] I think it is the venerable Bishop Hall, who exhorts to a religious life by the example of one, who, when dying, observed to those around him—"I am about to change my place, but not my company." So blessed are they who, even among men, "do walk with God," and even on earth "have their conversation in heaven!"

has sometimes found an hour of rest from his worldly cares, or consolation in his hour of sorrow, my labour will have been well repaid. He will see that the object of the work is to fortify his mind with principles, which, under the Divine blessing, may not only sustain him amid the temptations of the world in health and prosperity, but comfort him amid the varied trials which the changes and scenes of life bring to every man—principles which may soothe him in the weary season of sickness, speak peace to his agitated heart in the days of his mourning, and hold forth to him a hope which knoweth no fear, even in the awful hour of death.

That he may the more justly estimate the importance of that object, and the value of those principles, I have urged the advantage of occasionally retiring from the world; withdrawing for a season from its allowable enjoyments, and even from its more active duties; in order that he may be free to "commune with his own heart, and in his chamber, and be still." *There,* Reason gains her fair influence, for passion is at rest; the gentle whisperings of conscience are there heard and listened to, for the busy hum of life is hushed; and there the gracious Spirit of the Most High pleads and strives with man successfully [1]; for the convinced sinner has no longer at hand that too welcome barrier against conviction, which the pride and prejudice and the vanity of this world interpose. In those moments, therefore, the various delusions, under which sin too often leads the soul astray, vanish. Every man then feels that his highest interests, both for time and eternity, are at stake in this his state of probation; and under that feeling, he anxiously looks around for some surer means to secure those interests, than human power or human wisdom may supply. Yet whether he recall the past, or watch the present hour, or anxiously expect

[1] Gen. vi. 3. Ezek. xx. 30; and Acts vii. 57.

the future, to whom can he look with sure confidence for availing help, but to God? from whom else can he seek *unfailing* comfort, strength, and guidance? And who of us, whether we consider the past, the present, or the future—who of us does not require this heavenly comfort? As we advance in life, how often does the *past* come over us like a cloud, to dim the brightness of the present hour; and fill the heart with sadness! There springs up perhaps the remembrance of some joyous scenes, bright with all the glow and freshness of our youthful years; and now for ever gone. Or, our mind arrays, in long succession, various comforts which have dropped away. Of friends, some are alienated by the clashing of interests, or the caprices of temper; others are cut off by death, when we had learned best to prize them, and felt that most we needed them. Perhaps the ease, with which competence once blessed us, is changed into cares and anxious fears for those supplies, which change of fortune now renders precarious. Health yields to sickness. Or—still heavier trial—the recollection of past sins, unheeded in their commission, and still unrepented of, now touched by some secret spring of an awakened conscience, may start up, and fill our hearts with heaviness. As thoughts like these arise to harass us, there is one only refuge—the mercy of God through Jesus Christ our Lord; mercy so unbounded, that though it permits not the past to be recalled, and those who die in their sins must, therefore, for those sins be punished, yet it graciously assures the *repentant* sinner, that all the dreadful memories of past sins, all the horrors even of long-suppressed remorse, shall be obliterated, washed out—*blotted* out—by the blood of atonement, and be as though they had never been [1]. So with the *present* hour. There is generally some or other cause of anxiety, for which the world has no

[1] "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." Acts iii. 19; also Isa. liv. 22.

remedy, yet which is met by Christian faith. "In the world ye must have tribulation," saith our God; but the world offers no comfort to balance it: whereas the gracious Being who died for our sins, did also "overcome the world" for us: and in that *his* victory bids us "be of good cheer;" for the fruits of that victory are *our own:* "*My* peace I give unto *you.*" But suppose it sometimes to happen—it can happen but rarely—that the past has neither vain regrets nor special sorrows to cloud the enjoyment of life, and that the present is marked with no such trials as may fill the heart with sadness; it were impossible to suppose any man free from anxiety as to the *future.* True, the profligate may pretend a chilling indifference to religion generally, may scoff the notion of acting up to a religious principle, where policy or passion interpose, and pretend to consider a sense of religious responsibility a matter, if not of choice, at least foreign to him, and rather adapted to minds of a lower order, and of less advanced wisdom; *he,* forsooth, in the height of his pride, is superior to the prejudices of his fellow-mortals. The ignorant, too, if devoid of religious principle, may sometimes wish to shelter himself under his want of religious knowledge; and may pretend exemption from the strict course of duty prescribed by the written word—"He is not of the learned!" But there is no individual—whether the proud of reason and of intellect, or the wilful ignorant—who is really indifferent to his eternal welfare. Let be, that there is no fear for the *past,* no care for the *present*—there must be, and there *are,* either fears or hopes for the *future.* And though wisdom and mercy ordain that no mortal eye shall pierce the dim veil which shrouds from us that futurity, yet not only does every conscience own a future state, in which will be determined our happiness or misery for ever, but, as I have endeavoured to show, the Light of the word which came down from heaven, has so far revealed it to us, that even the partial view

there vouchsafed, whilst it awakens the fears of the sinner, and encourages the aspirations of the penitent, has yet power to calm the fears, and confirm the faith, and brighten the hope of the faithful and the good. Enough is revealed to render our present trials more than bearable, whether prosperity require a guard against the allurements and vanities of the world, or adversity need a refuge from its woes; the former, being transitory, may well be resigned, since we can look to those enduring joys which await us hereafter; and if inducement be wanting to endure tribulation patiently, we have but to remember that tribulation leadeth to glory[1]. Surely a revelation which opens to us the prospect of a death of peace and an eternity of happiness, reveals enough to encourage and sustain us in a cheerful fulfilment of the duties of a holy and religious course of life, and in preparing calmly and peaceably for our end. The several stations in life, indeed, have each their own peculiar trials; yet are there some to which every man is equally liable. Accident, sickness, loss of friends by death, and the prospect of our own death, mingling the highest and the noblest among the common mass of mankind, marking all equally as of the fallen race of Adam, and liable to the infirmities of a fallen nature; thus practically "warning *every* man, and teaching *every* man," that for all equally, there is "one thing needful." Hence, could we look into the heart, we should find, that in the most exalted, as in the lowest ranks of society, there are periods of mournful reflection, and secret sorrow, for which the world has no remedy; afflictions of various kinds, and causes of anxiety in various degrees, which pomp cannot soothe, or power allay: bitter griefs there are, of which each knoweth his own, and which, even with the nearest and dearest of earthly friends, can neither be shared nor communicated. It is *then* that the soul, in the retirement of a Christian Watchfulness,

[1] John vi. 33. Acts xiv. 22; and Rev. vii. 14.

finds refuge in prayer, and seeks the more immediate presence of its God. To Him it then pours forth, unreservedly, all its misery. It casts upon God the burden too heavy for man to bear; and, in the stead, takes the yoke of Christ, and finds its burthen light.

In my endeavour still further to impress the reader with the importance at once, and the blessedness of this Christian Watchfulness, I have led him to scenes of sorrow, where the spirit of Jesus Christ, assured to all who "ask and seek" it, has been bountifully vouchsafed; bringing "joy and peace in believing;" scenes, where the word of God—the "sword of the Spirit"—has proved itself of heavenly temper; clearing away every difficulty, removing every doubt, and opening the way for victory over even man's "*last* enemy;" scenes of *Death*, where nature would have sunk under its deep and often unutterable woe, had not He been at hand, a very present God, whose promise, made to the ear by the voice of the Gospel, is never broken to the heart. Indeed, scenes of death every way test the truth as it is in Christ. Do penitence and faith there shine in their own proper lustre, and in all the radiance of a hope whose light is from heaven? so there also, wickedness and irreligion stand exposed in their dark hour of misery and remorse. In the death-hour, all concealment of a conviction of sin is impossible. However an aching heart may in health have been hidden under the semblance of indifference, or a scoffing unbelief under the pretence of higher wisdom, or a secret dread of eternity under the bitter laugh of scorn at the servant of the cross—when death comes, the mask drops off. The soul, hovering between the present and the future world, learns to give to each its due value, estimating fairly the light and passing advantages of the one, and the weighty and enduring blessings of the other. Thus truth is vindicated. On the one hand, the most desperately wicked—as they shrink from dying in the dreadful recklessness which marked

their lives, and would in death fain repent and be saved—do bear their awful testimony to the word of the Lord, that "there is no peace to the wicked," for "sin lieth at the door." On the other hand, the glorious prospect of eternal bliss, opened by the Gospel to every faithful servant of Jesus Christ, gives full earnest of the promised "reward to the righteous [1]." The sinner is convinced, the careless are aroused, the weak are strengthened, the strong are confirmed. Christian Watchfulness triumphs; for it gives to death a welcome.

If these thoughts might ever be of weight—if ever it were a wise and salutary measure for man to look to God as the "Father of lights, from whom is *every* good and perfect gift"—specially "the gift of life eternal, through Christ Jesus,"—it is in these days. We live in an age when the human mind, from the very extent and greatness of its accumulated powers, is in danger of disregarding its dependence upon the great Creator of all things! and contented with looking to secondary causes in which man is the agent, omits due reference to the Almighty—the final cause of all, forgetting the Giver in the gift [2]. In proportion, therefore, to the influence upon our souls, of the hurry and excitement of the present world, should be our watchful care never to lose our hold of the blessed hope of everlasting life in that future world, to which we are all hastening, and from which there will be no return. Nor let any proudly cast from them this spirit of watchfulness, as though it would weaken mental energy, and contract the free scope of intellectual powers—it will the rather give a right tendency to those powers, and a worthy and beneficial direction to those energies; directing them, where reason and religion alike teach us to direct them, to

[1] Ps. lviii. 10. "So that a man shall say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous: doubtless, there is a God that judgeth the earth."

[2] See pages 30 and 31.

the glory of Him who giveth them: whilst the whole mind, elevated by a sense of living under the eye of THE SUPREME, and bound to do all things to his honour, will expand into nobler and more enlarged modes both of thinking and acting: sustained by a strength of purpose, all unfelt before; strong in religious principle, strong in religious sentiment, strong in religious fear, strong in religious hope—strong in the Lord. To attain for you and myself this strength, ere the hour of death and the day of judgment come, is my object in this work. True, like the disciples of our Lord, who followed Him to the mount of transfiguration, we are not always there to abide—not to set up the tent of our rest on a mount so glorious; we must to the world again—must return to a fulfilment of its duties; bearing our appointed share of its sorrows, and enduring such trials as may await us there; but we may hope so to return, better and happier: every unworthy feeling subdued, every heavenly grace cherished; love to God and love to man filling our hearts; living in the world, but "delivered from the evil of it," through Jesus Christ our Lord [1].

Fare-thee-well then, my reader! May Almighty God bless thee in thine onward way to heaven! We part in this life; to meet, as let us humbly pray we *may* meet, in life everlasting.

To those of my readers who may haply be of the flock of Christ, specially committed to my charge—I must address yet a few more words. If, as an appointed minister of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, I am anxious that *all* men "hear and be saved," you may for yourselves judge, in what proportion that anxiety is increased, when I look to *you!*—And here I cannot forbear adding, that as my first object in undertaking this work, was a hope that it might, by the blessing of God, aid you in a righteous

[1] John xvii. 15.

and peaceful course, so the affection with which you receive my ministrations—both in the discharge of the public duties of my office, and in those seasons of sorrow, when sickness or death bring me to your dwellings—has proved a continual encouragement to me; leading to what will I trust prove no vain expectation, that the same truths, which, by Divine grace, may have brought conviction and comfort to you when uttered by my lips, may prove neither less convincing nor less comforting, when recorded by my pen. May the God and Father of all keep you stedfast in that Christian Watchfulness, to which my voice and pen alike would urge you! Well know I that it is only when so watching, that your hearts can be at peace. From that state of preparation must spring whatever may brighten the days of your earthly pilgrimage: for who of us must not confess, that if ever our spirits feel an elasticity which bears them buoyant above this present world, it is when we are watchful and ready for the world beyond the grave?

SCARCELY had my pen concluded the preceding lines, when a knell of death arose, which struck to my heart with unwonted awe. It tokened that our venerable Bishop, who had intrusted to me the spiritual charge of you for whom chiefly these pages have been written, had ended all his earthly labours, and had passed, so we humbly trust, to his rest in heaven[1]. It was in truth a sad and solemn thought for me, that though my responsibility to him, my spiritual father in Christ, was closed for ever here, that responsibility must be met, once again, before the dread tribunal of our God. Thus, as each note fell on the ear, it sunk deeper and deeper into my heart, and gave to the past hours that due value, which is never felt till they are beyond recall. We then think how still more anxiously, still more diligently, we should have employed them, as those who must give account. But what if it be mine, not only to share a common grief in the death of one who, during a long and useful life, had been the learned and watchful champion of the Gospel of Christ, and the vigilant pastor of that apostolical Church over which the providence of God had set him as a spiritual overseer—what if it be mine also, to feel that my responsibility in the charge committed to me by him, has received an accumulated weight by his death? Am I therefore discouraged? God forbid! Rather, I find in it for myself, what you also will, I trust, share with me--an added motive for increased diligence in together striving in the great work of our salvation. That with me this event must ever prove a powerful motive to labour more and more earnestly for the welfare of your souls, every heart can feel: for if the voice of the living be heeded, say, with what anxious

[1] Herbert Marsh, D.D., Lord Bishop of Peterborough, died at seven o'clock in the evening of May 1st, 1839.

zeal, with what ardour, unfelt before, does duty fulfil the wishes of the dead! I know that you share with me this sentiment. On you, then, as on myself, let the feeling which it expresses be operative. Let us labour with an earnestness, perhaps not evidenced before, in "working out our own salvation"—each one "according to his vocation and ministry"—I, in "ministering as a steward of the manifold grace of God[1];" you, in aiding my anxious ministrations, by increased affection in receiving them. Thus prepare we, each and severally, to meet our God—thus wait we, "all the days of our appointed time, till *our* change come:" in Christian Faith; in Christian Hope; in Christian Watchfulness.

[1] 1 Pet. iv. 10.

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Christian watchfulness

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